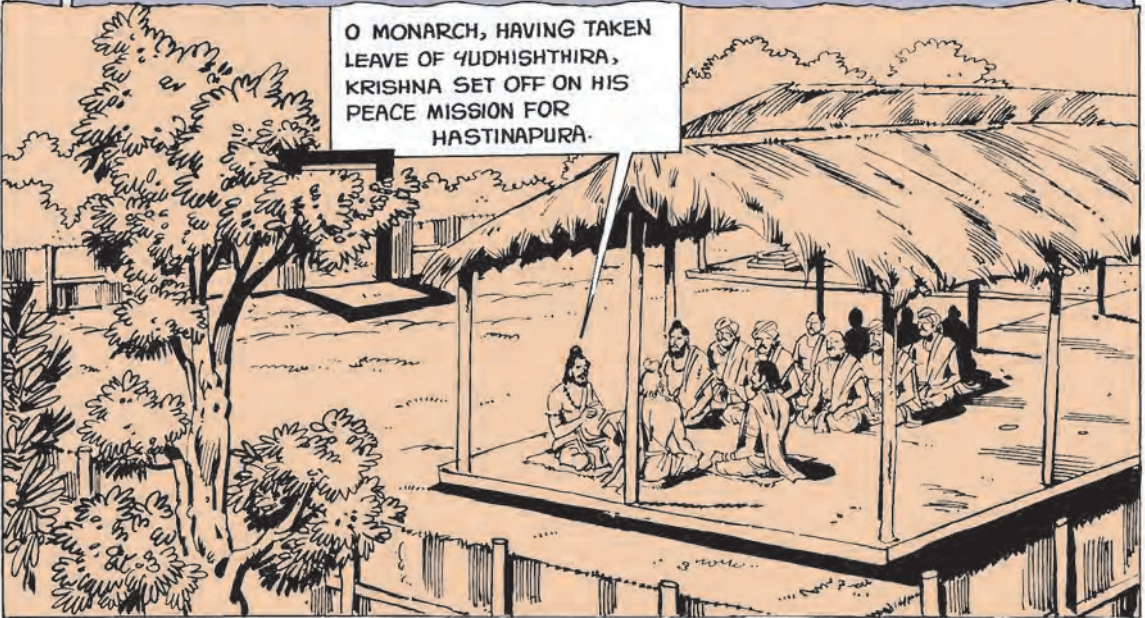


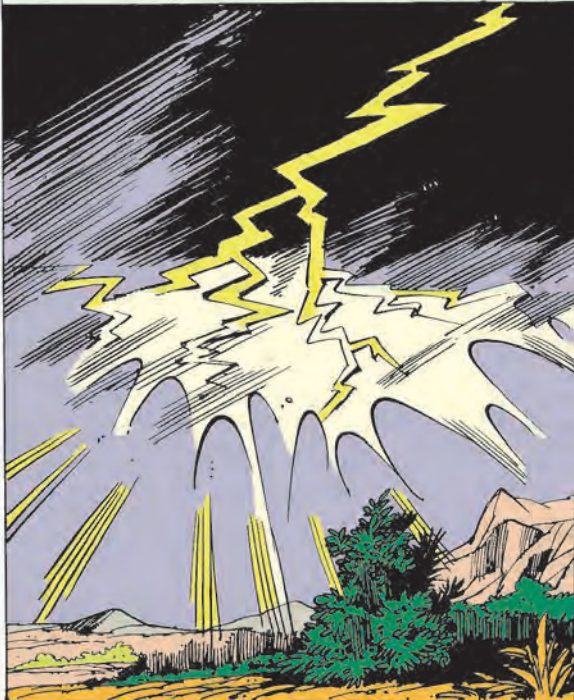
Mahabharata - 29

KRISHNA'S PEACE MISSION

O MONARCH, HAVING TAKEN
LEAVE OF YUDHISHTHIRA,
KRISHNA SET OFF ON HIS
PEACE MISSION FOR
HASTINAPURA.



"AND STRANGE OMENS WERE SEEN ON THE
OCCASION. THOUGH THERE WERE NO CLOUDS,
THERE WERE THUNDER AND LIGHTNING.



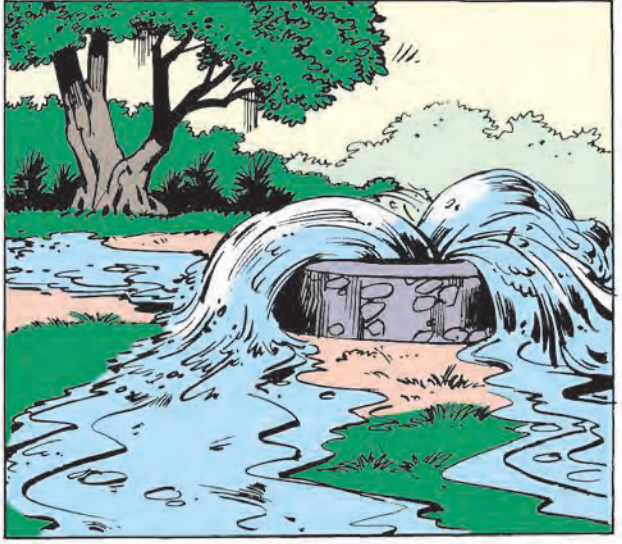
"THE SKY WAS CLEAR AND YET THERE WAS
TORRENTIAL RAIN.



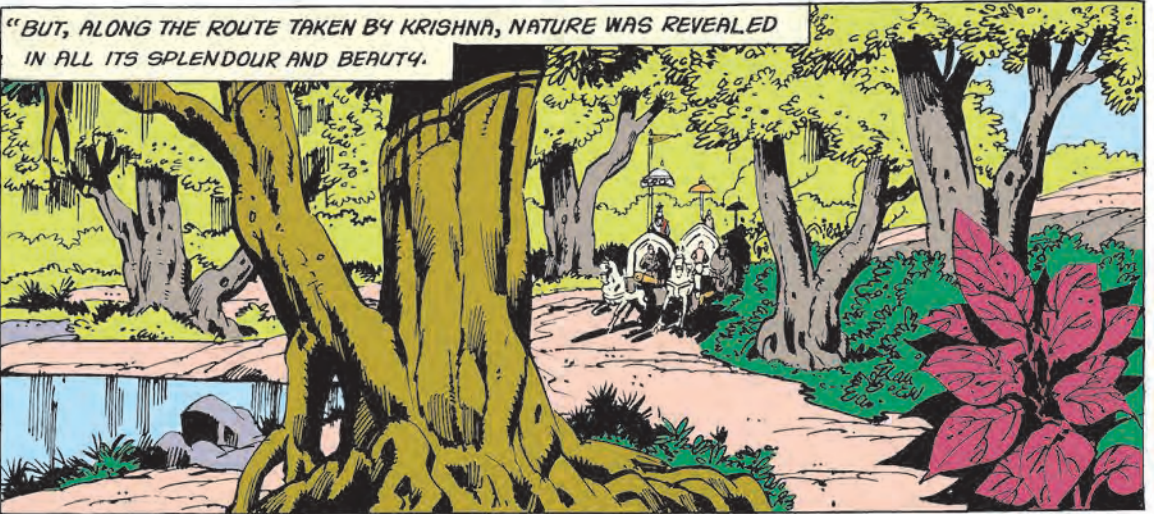
"THE RIVERS FLOWED UPSTREAM."



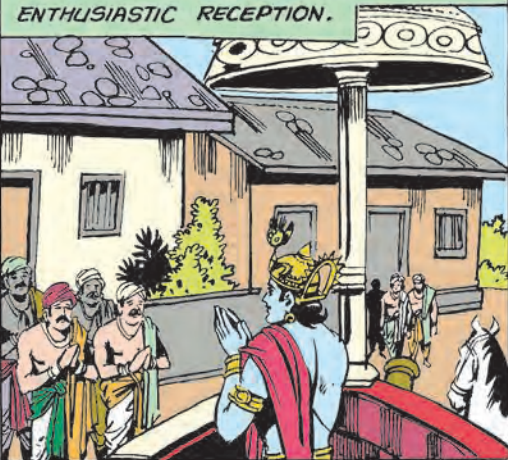
"THE WELLS SPEWED OUT THEIR CONTENTS."



"BUT, ALONG THE ROUTE TAKEN BY KRISHNA, NATURE WAS REVEALED IN ALL ITS SPLENDOUR AND BEAUTY."



"WHEREVER HE WENT, HE RECEIVED AN ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION."

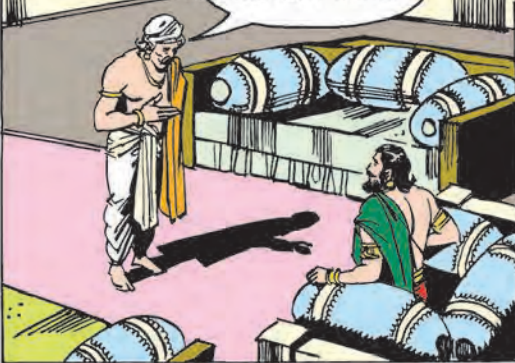


"AT VRIKASTHALA, ON THE WAY TO HASTINAPURA—"



"MEANWHILE, AT HASTINAPURA, A SPY PRESENTED HIMSELF BEFORE KING DHRITARASHTRA.

O GREAT KING, KRISHNA IS ON HIS WAY HERE.

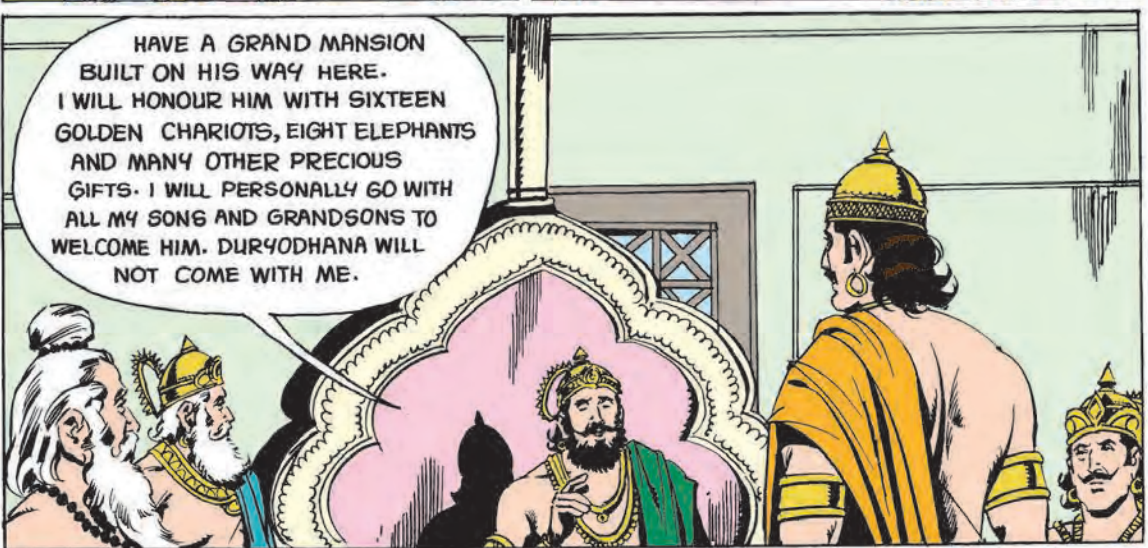


"DHRTARASHTRA IMMEDIATELY CALLED VIDURA.

O VIDURA, WE MUST SPARE NO EFFORT IN GIVING A BIG WELCOME TO KRISHNA. HE IS THE FOREMOST AMONG MEN AND WORTHY OF WORSHIP.

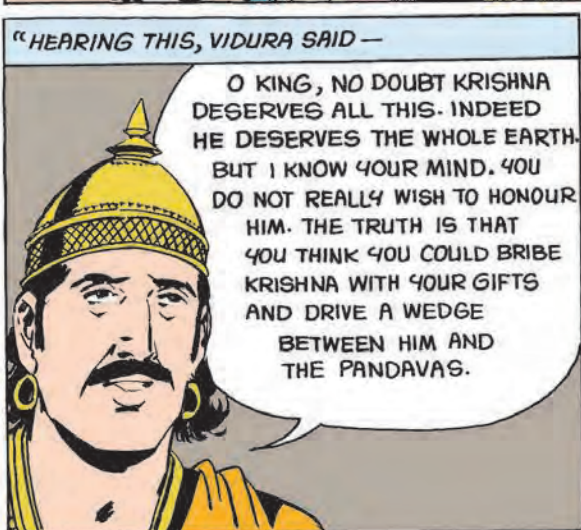


HAVE A GRAND MANSION BUILT ON HIS WAY HERE. I WILL HONOUR HIM WITH SIXTEEN GOLDEN CHARIOTS, EIGHT ELEPHANTS AND MANY OTHER PRECIOUS GIFTS. I WILL PERSONALLY GO WITH ALL MY SONS AND GRANDSONS TO WELCOME HIM. DURYODHANA WILL NOT COME WITH ME.

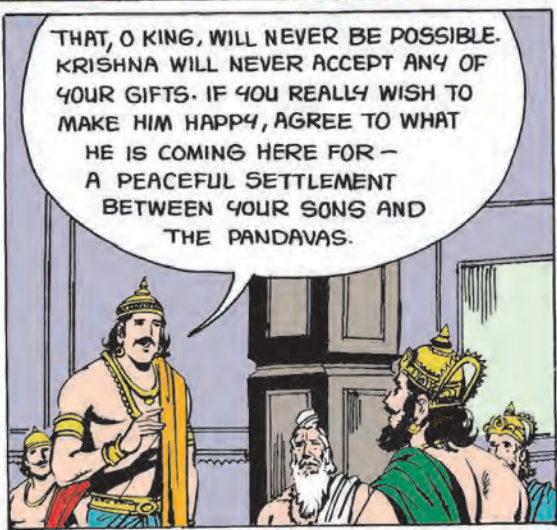


"HEARING THIS, VIDURA SAID —

O KING, NO DOUBT KRISHNA DESERVES ALL THIS. INDEED HE DESERVES THE WHOLE EARTH. BUT I KNOW YOUR MIND. YOU DO NOT REALLY WISH TO HONOUR HIM. THE TRUTH IS THAT YOU THINK YOU COULD BRIBE KRISHNA WITH YOUR GIFTS AND DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN HIM AND THE PANDAVAS.



THAT, O KING, WILL NEVER BE POSSIBLE. KRISHNA WILL NEVER ACCEPT ANY OF YOUR GIFTS. IF YOU REALLY WISH TO MAKE HIM HAPPY, AGREE TO WHAT HE IS COMING HERE FOR — A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT BETWEEN YOUR SONS AND THE PANDAVAS.



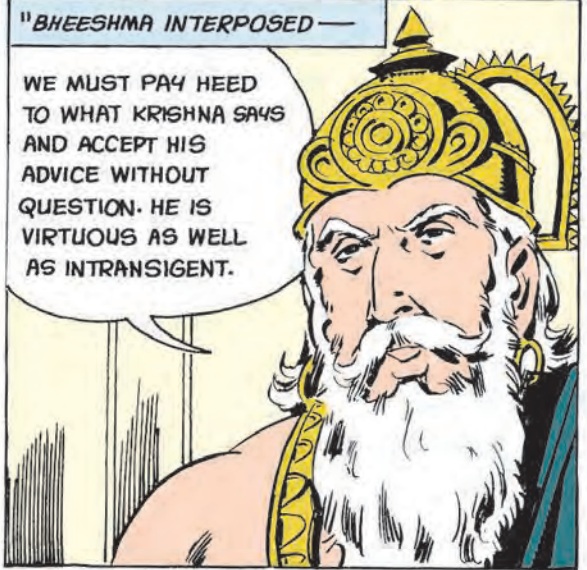
"DURYODHANA SAID—

O KING, I TOO THINK YOU WILL NOT SUCCEED IN ALIENATING KRISHNA FROM THE PANDAVAS. DO NOT GO TOO FAR TO PLEASE HIM. HE MAY THINK WE ARE AFRAID OF HIM.



"BHEESHMA INTERPOSED—

WE MUST PAY HEED TO WHAT KRISHNA SAYS AND ACCEPT HIS ADVICE WITHOUT QUESTION. HE IS VIRTUOUS AS WELL AS INTRANSIGENT.



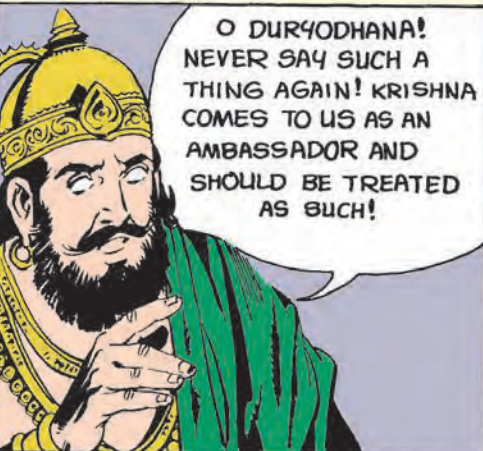
"BUT DURYODHANA PERSISTED.

O GRANDSIRE, THERE IS NOT THE LEAST LIKELIHOOD OF MY SHARING THE KINGDOM WITH THE PANDAVAS. LISTEN, EVERYBODY, TO MY PLAN. I WANT TO IMPRISON KRISHNA ON WHOM THE PANDAVAS RELY SO MUCH. WITHOUT HIM, THE PANDAVAS AND THEIR ALLIES WILL BE EASILY OVERCOME BY US. DO SUGGEST HOW TO GO ABOUT MY PLAN.



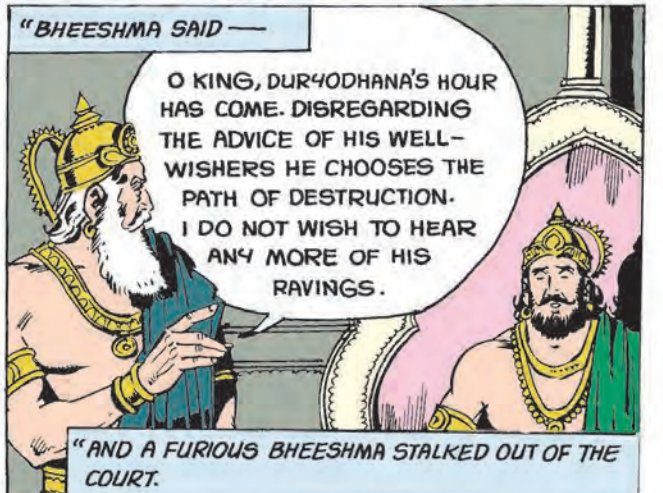
"DHRTARASHTRA WAS SHOCKED.—

O DURYODHANA! NEVER SAY SUCH A THING AGAIN! KRISHNA COMES TO US AS AN AMBASSADOR AND SHOULD BE TREATED AS SUCH!



"BHEESHMA SAID —

O KING, DURYODHANA'S HOUR HAS COME. DISREGARDING THE ADVICE OF HIS WELL-WISHERS HE CHOOSES THE PATH OF DESTRUCTION. I DO NOT WISH TO HEAR ANY MORE OF HIS RAVINGS.

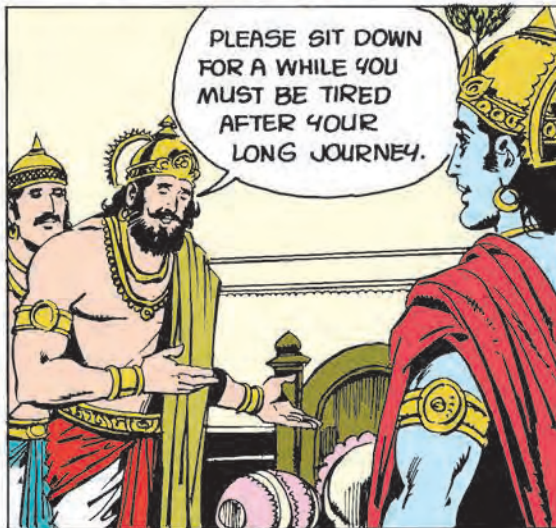


"AND A FURIOUS BHEESHMA STALKED OUT OF THE COURT.

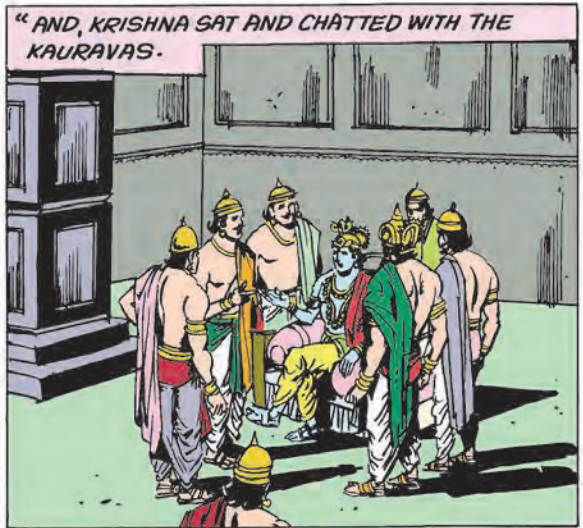
"THE NEXT DAY KRISHNA WAS GIVEN A WARM WELCOME ON HIS ARRIVAL AT THE COURT OF HASTINAPURA."



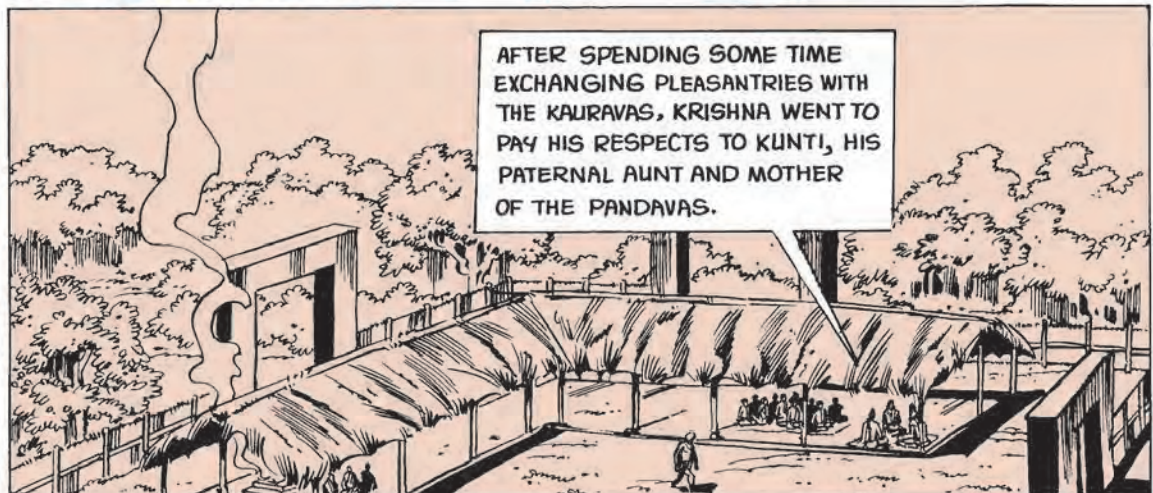
PLEASE SIT DOWN FOR A WHILE YOU MUST BE TIRED AFTER YOUR LONG JOURNEY.



"AND, KRISHNA SAT AND CHATTED WITH THE KAURAVAS."



AFTER SPENDING SOME TIME EXCHANGING PLEASANTRIES WITH THE KAURAVAS, KRISHNA WENT TO PAY HIS RESPECTS TO KUNTI, HIS PATERNAL AUNT AND MOTHER OF THE PANDAVAS.



"HER VOICE CHOKED WITH GRIEF, KUNTI SAID TO KRISHNA—

HOW ARE MY SONS ? THEY WERE USED TO A LIFE OF COMFORT IN PALATIAL MANSIONS. HOW ARE THEY FARING IN THE FORESTS INFESTED WITH SAVAGE BEASTS?



HOW IS MY VIRTUOUS YUDHISHTHIRA AND HOW IS MY POWERFUL BHEEMA WHO IS EASILY AROUSED TO ANGER ? HOW IS MY ARJUNA, THAT DEARLY LOVED COUSIN AND FRIEND OF YOURS ? ARE THE TWINS IN GOOD HEALTH ? AND MY DEAREST DAUGHTER-IN-LAW, THE BEAUTIFUL PANCHALI, IS SHE WELL ?



HOW SHE HAS SUFFERED AT THE HANDS OF THE VILE KAURAVAS! O KRISHNA, NEVER IN MY LIFE HAVE I FELT AS GRIEVED AS WHEN I SAW DRAUPADI BEING DRAGGED INTO THE KAURAVA ASSEMBLY AND DISGRACED IN FRONT OF EVERYBODY.



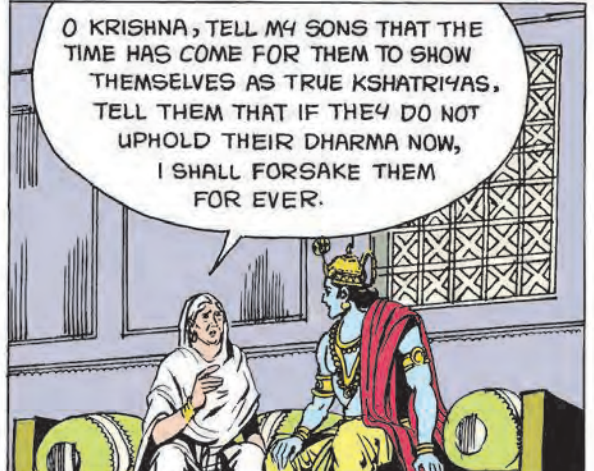
WIDOWHOOD, POVERTY, DEPENDENCE ON CHARITY AND PROLONGED SEPARATION FROM MY SONS HAVE CAUSED ME GREAT SUFFERING.



I WAS DISTRESSED AT MY NOBLE SONS BEING DRIVEN INTO THE FOREST. AND NOW THEY HAVE EVEN BEEN DEPRIVED OF THEIR LIVELIHOOD. WE DESERVE HAPPINESS, O KRISHNA AFTER LONG YEARS OF AGONY.



O KRISHNA, TELL MY SONS THAT THE TIME HAS COME FOR THEM TO SHOW THEMSELVES AS TRUE KSHATRIYAS. TELL THEM THAT IF THEY DO NOT UPHOLD THEIR DHARMA NOW, I SHALL FORSAKE THEM FOR EVER.



"KRISHNA CONSOLED KUNTI —

O AUNT, DO NOT
GIVE IN TO DESPAIR.
YOU HAVE BORNE
HEROIC SONS. THEY ARE
VIRTUOUS AND WISE.
THEY WILL BEFORE LONG
VANQUISH THEIR ENEMIES
AND BECOME LORDS
OF THE WORLD.



"THEREAFTER KRISHNA PROCEEDED TO DURYODHANA'S
PALACE.

WELCOME,
O KRISHNA.

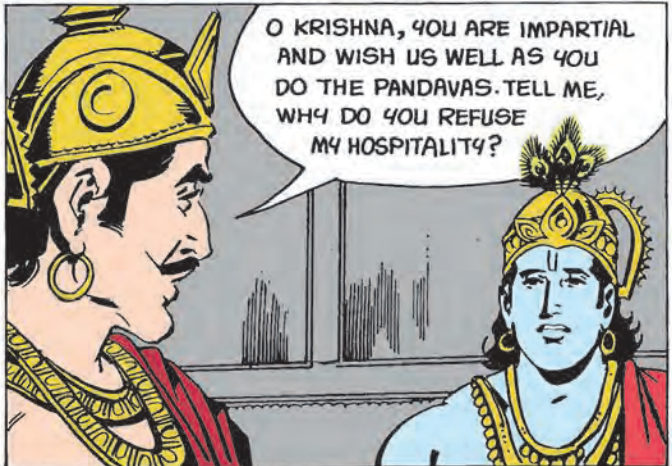


O KRISHNA,
DO ME THE
HONOUR OF
SHARING A MEAL
WITH ME.

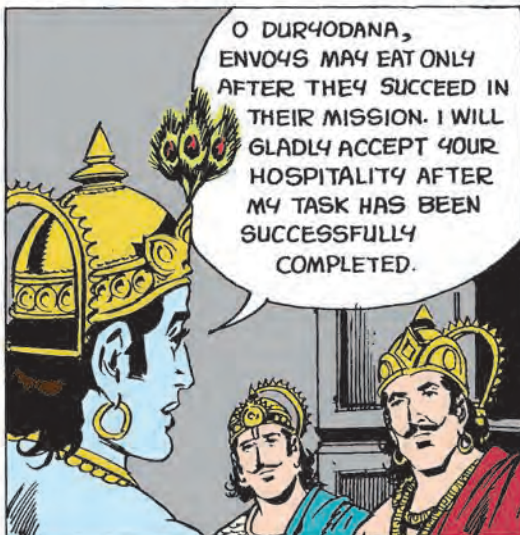
O DURYODHANA,
I MUST DECLINE
YOUR
INVITATION.



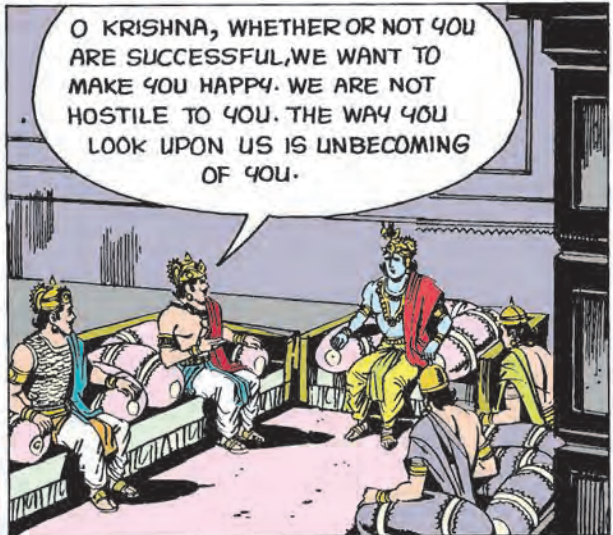
O KRISHNA, YOU ARE IMPARTIAL
AND WISH US WELL AS YOU
DO THE PANDAVAS. TELL ME,
WHY DO YOU REFUSE
MY HOSPITALITY?



O DURYODANA,
ENVOYS MAY EAT ONLY
AFTER THEY SUCCEED IN
THEIR MISSION. I WILL
GLADLY ACCEPT YOUR
HOSPITALITY AFTER
MY TASK HAS BEEN
SUCCESSFULLY
COMPLETED.

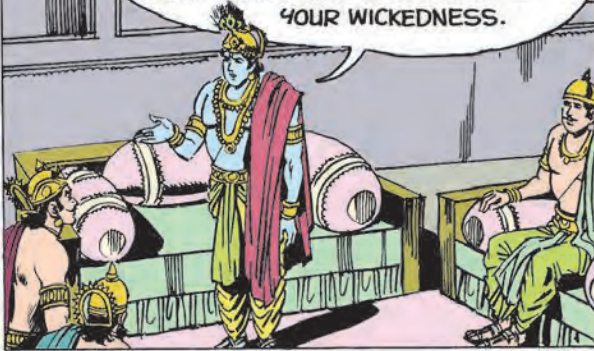


O KRISHNA, WHETHER OR NOT YOU
ARE SUCCESSFUL, WE WANT TO
MAKE YOU HAPPY. WE ARE NOT
HOSTILE TO YOU. THE WAY YOU
LOOK UPON US IS UNBECOMING
OF YOU.



"KRISHNA ROSE —

O DURYODHANA, ONE ACCEPTS AN INVITATION TO A MEAL EITHER OUT OF FRIENDSHIP AND GOODWILL OR OUT OF DIRE NEED. YOU HAVE NEVER BY ANY ACT OF YOURS INSPIRED FRIENDSHIP IN ME. NOR AM I IN EXTREME NEED. YOUR FOOD IS DEFILED BY YOUR WICKEDNESS.



"SO SAYING, HE WENT TO VIDURA'S PLACE AND TOOK HIS FOOD THERE.

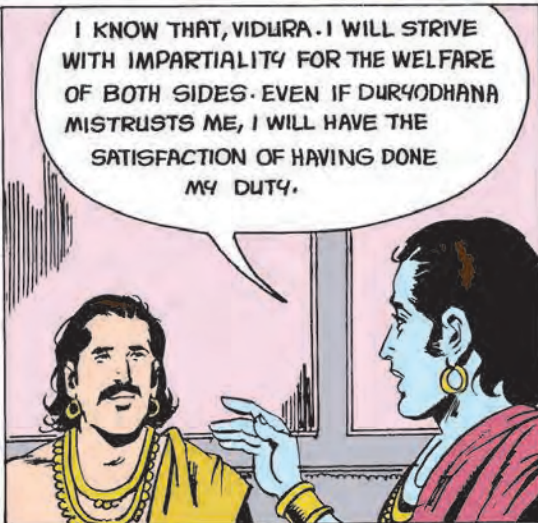


LATER—

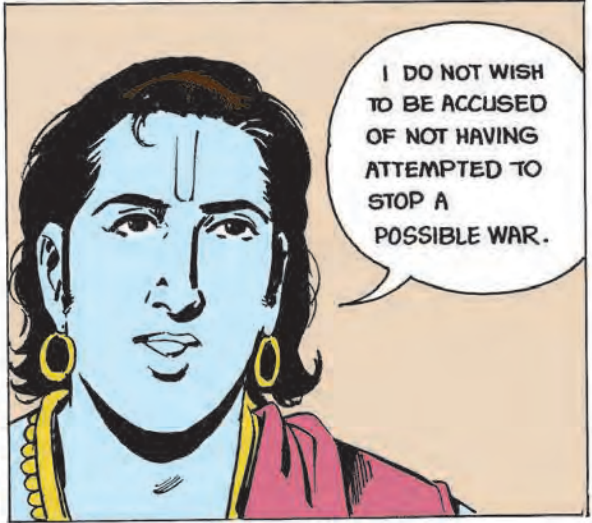
I DO NOT BELIEVE YOU HAVE DONE THE RIGHT THING IN COMING HERE. DURYODHANA AND HIS FRIENDS ARE EVIL. HE WILL DISREGARD YOUR COUNSEL. DO NOT GO IN THEIR MIDST, O KRISHNA.

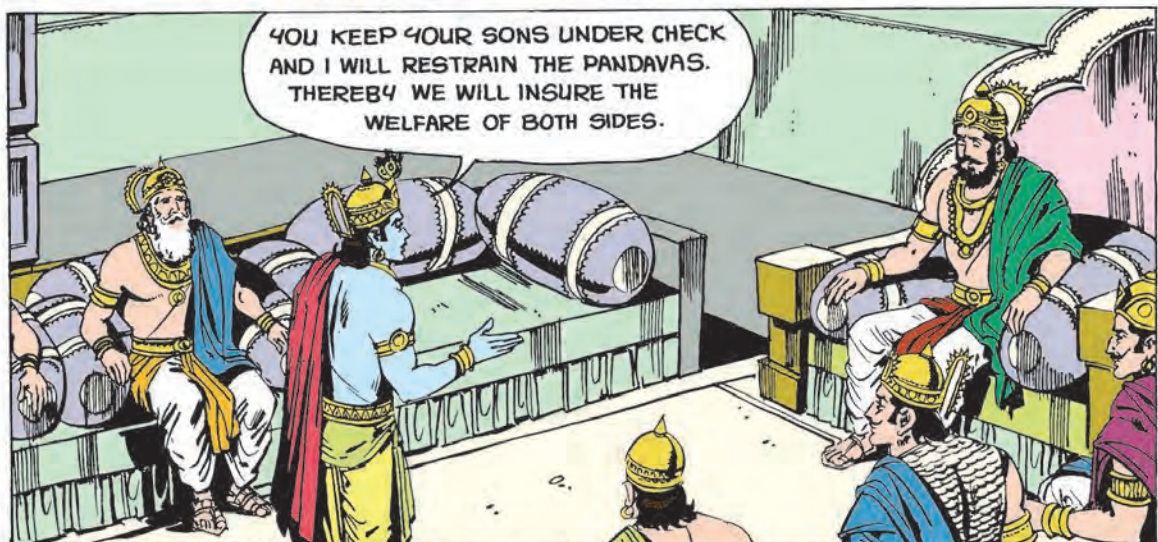
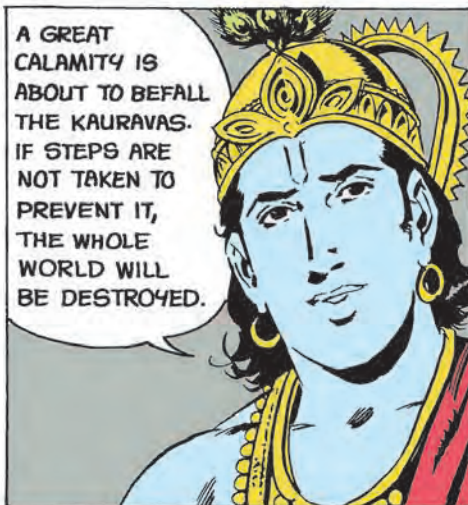
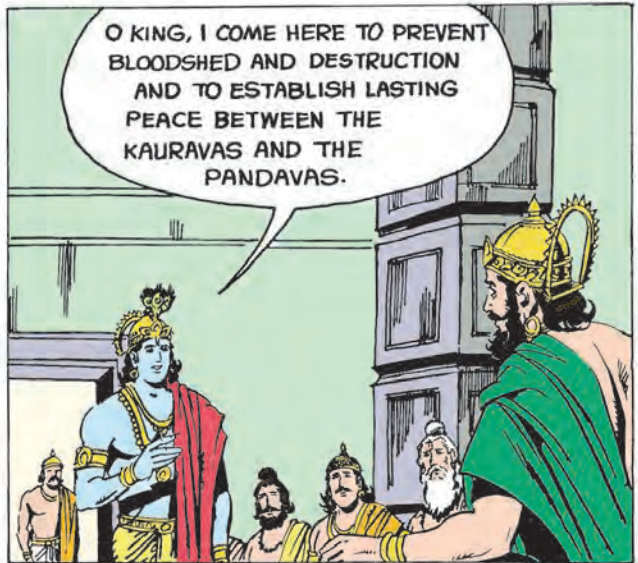
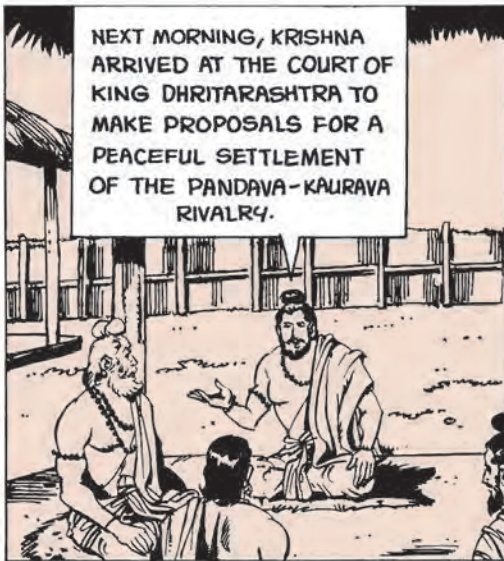


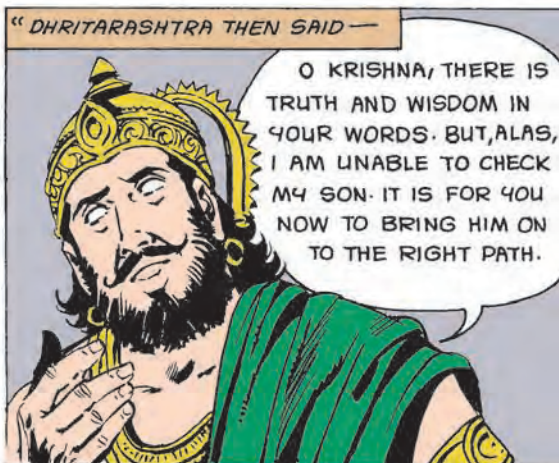
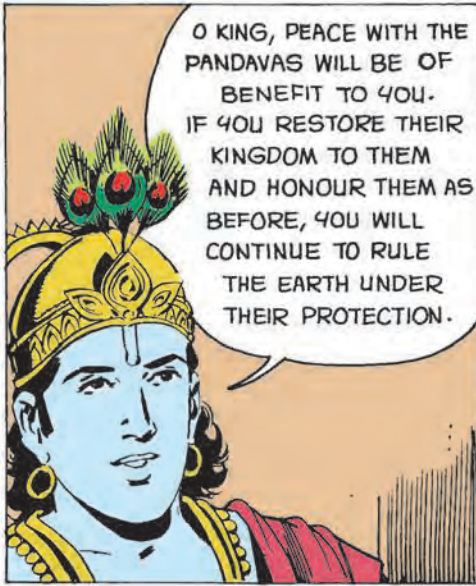
I KNOW THAT, VIDURA. I WILL STRIVE WITH IMPARTIALITY FOR THE WELFARE OF BOTH SIDES. EVEN IF DURYODHANA MISTRUSTS ME, I WILL HAVE THE SATISFACTION OF HAVING DONE MY DUTY.

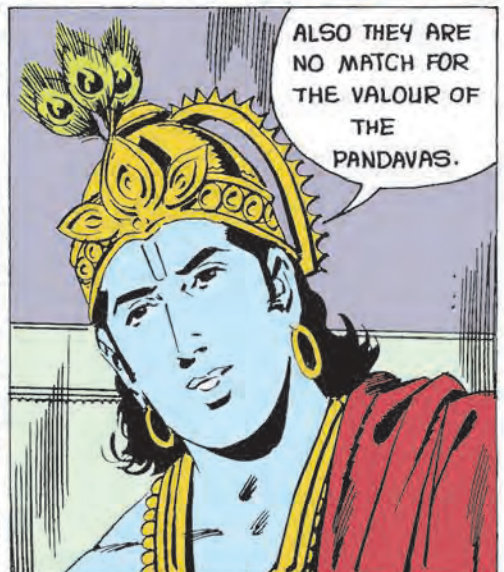
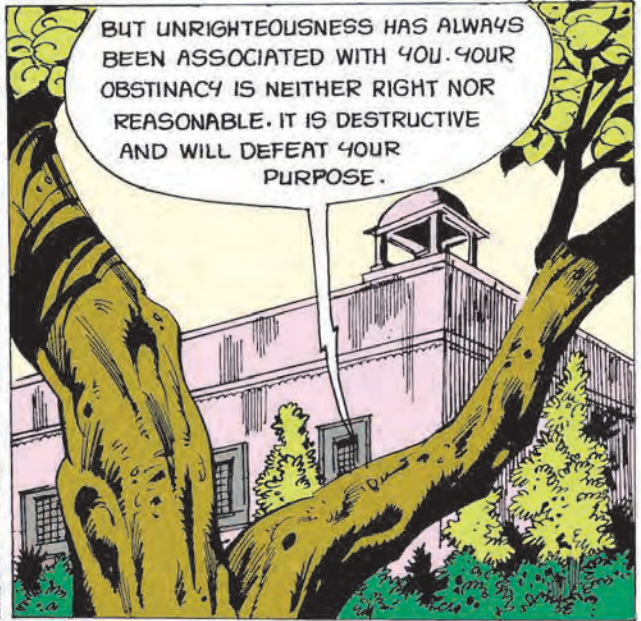
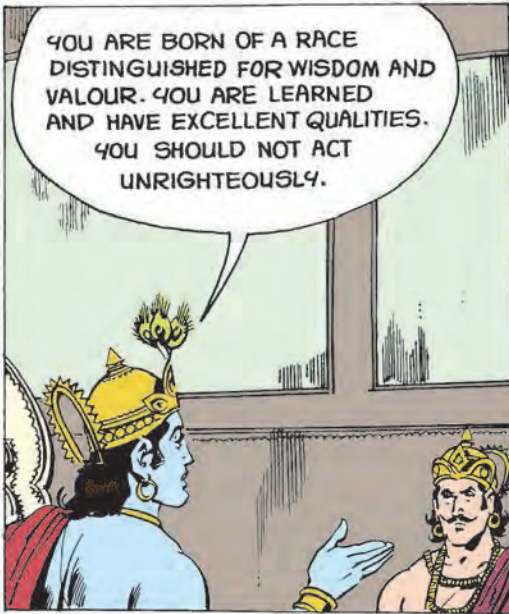


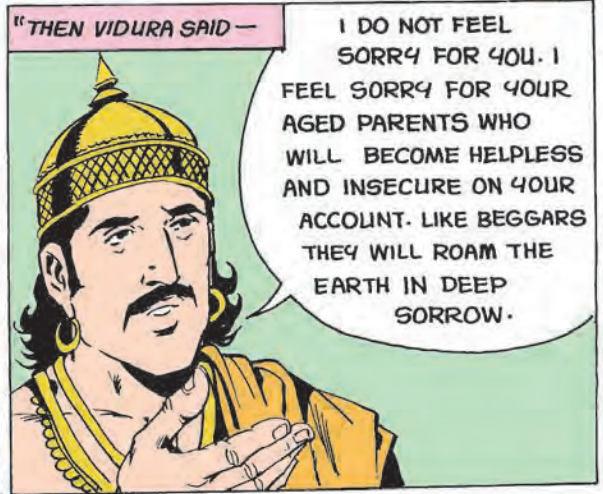
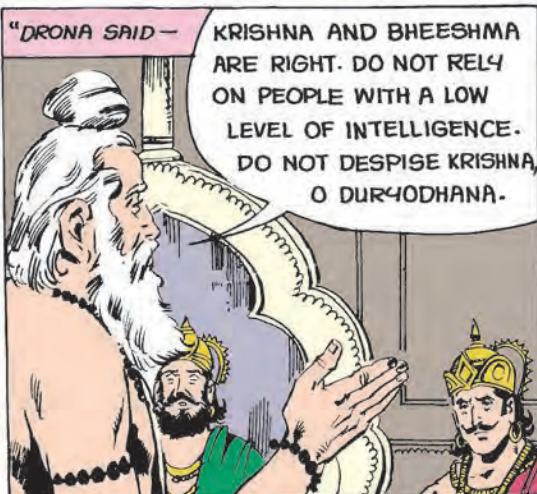
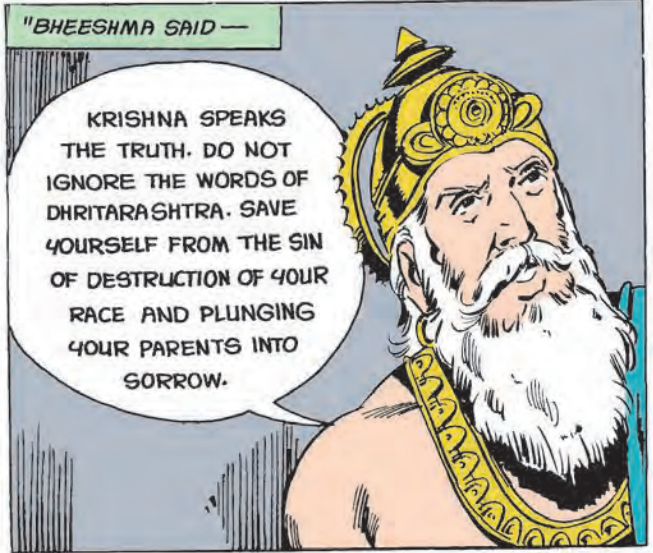
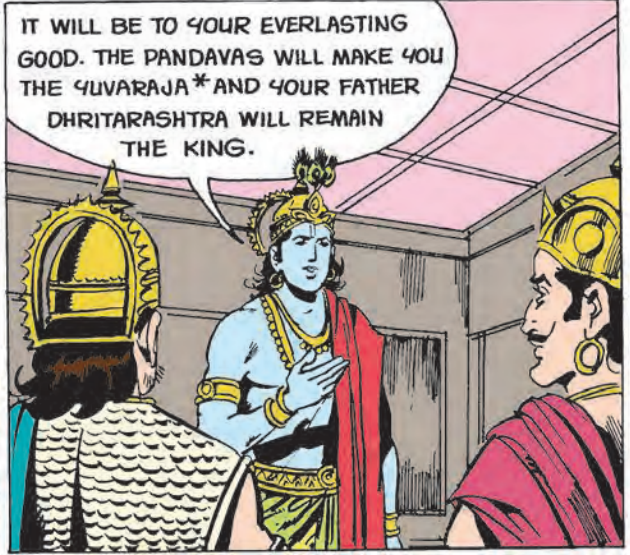
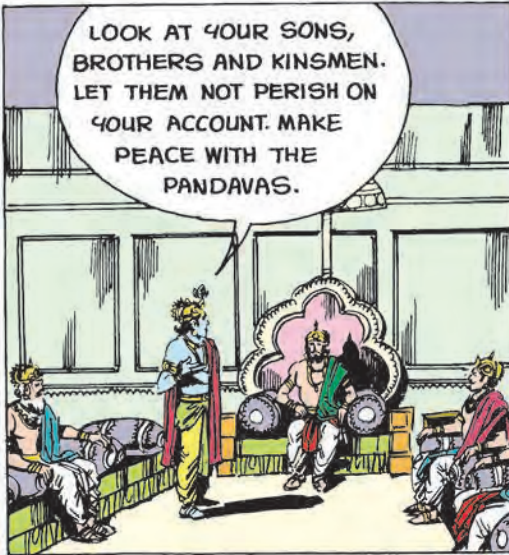
I DO NOT WISH TO BE ACCUSED OF NOT HAVING ATTEMPTED TO STOP A POSSIBLE WAR.









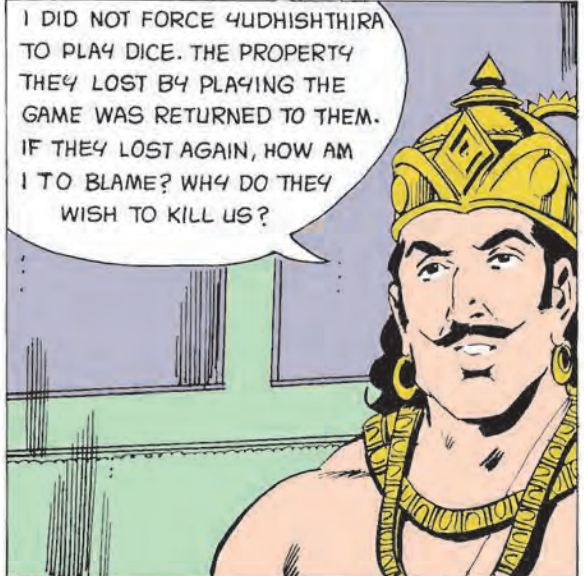


"HEARING ALL THIS, DURYODHANA SAID TO KRISHNA.

HOW UNJUST THAT EACH OF YOU SHOULD FIND FAULT WITH ME ALONE! THERE IS NOTHING REPREHENSIBLE IN MY BEHAVIOUR.



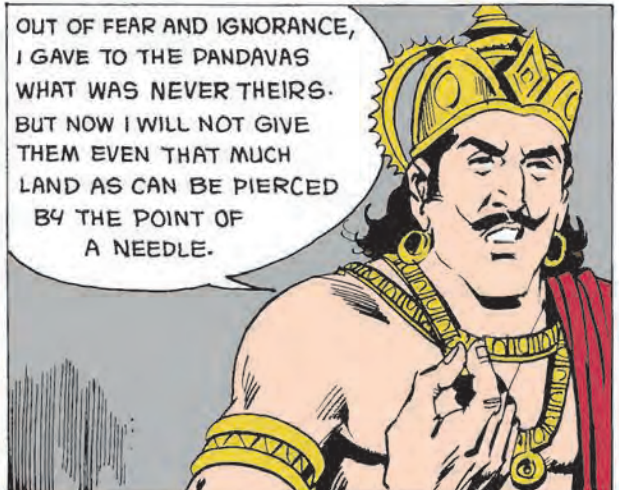
I DID NOT FORCE YUDHISHTHIRA TO PLAY DICE. THE PROPERTY THEY LOST BY PLAYING THE GAME WAS RETURNED TO THEM. IF THEY LOST AGAIN, HOW AM I TO BLAME? WHY DO THEY WISH TO KILL US?



THE KINGDOM BEQUEATHED TO ME BY MY FATHER WILL NEVER BE GIVEN AWAY SO LONG AS I AM ALIVE. WHILE KING DHRTIRASHTRA IS ALIVE, WE AND THE PANDAVAS SHOULD LIVE PEACEFULLY, WITHOUT RESORTING TO AN ARMED CONFLICT.

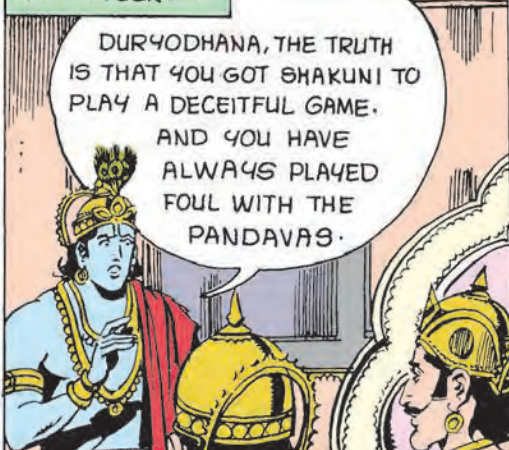


OUT OF FEAR AND IGNORANCE, I GAVE TO THE PANDAVAS WHAT WAS NEVER THEIRS. BUT NOW I WILL NOT GIVE THEM EVEN THAT MUCH LAND AS CAN BE PIERCED BY THE POINT OF A NEEDLE.

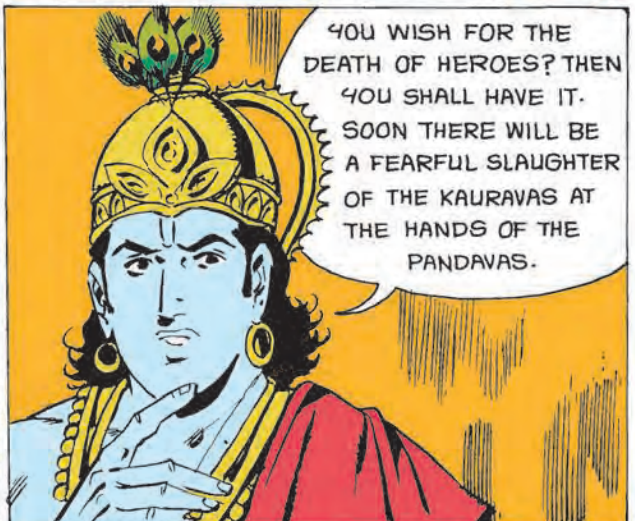


"KRISHNA REPLIED, HIS EYES FLASHING WITH ANGER —

DURYODHANA, THE TRUTH IS THAT YOU GOT SHAKUNI TO PLAY A DECEITFUL GAME. AND YOU HAVE ALWAYS PLAYED FOUL WITH THE PANDAVAS.



YOU WISH FOR THE DEATH OF HEROES? THEN YOU SHALL HAVE IT. SOON THERE WILL BE A FEARFUL SLAUGHTER OF THE KAURAVAS AT THE HANDS OF THE PANDAVAS.



"DUHSHASANA SAID—

O DURYODHANA, I SUSPECT THAT IF YOU DO NOT GIVE IN TO KRISHNA'S PROPOSAL, THEN YOU, KARNA AND I WILL BE BOUND HAND AND FOOT AND TURNED OVER TO THE PANDAVAS.



"DURYODHANA ROSE, SPEECHLESS WITH RAGE..."

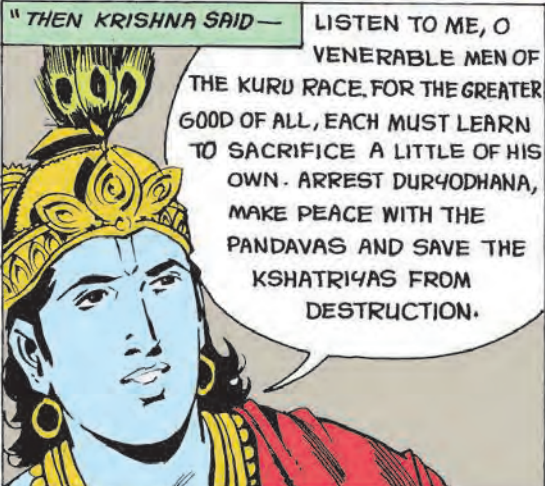


"... AND WITHOUT A WORD, HE STALKED OUT OF THE COURT, FOLLOWED BY ALL HIS BROTHERS AND COUNSELLORS.



"THEN KRISHNA SAID—

LISTEN TO ME, O VENERABLE MEN OF THE KURU RACE, FOR THE GREATER GOOD OF ALL, EACH MUST LEARN TO SACRIFICE A LITTLE OF HIS OWN. ARREST DURYODHANA, MAKE PEACE WITH THE PANDAVAS AND SAVE THE KSHATRIYAS FROM DESTRUCTION.



DHRITARASHTRA SAID—

VIDURA, PLEASE BRING GANDHARI HERE. PERHAPS SHE WILL BE ABLE TO PERSUADE MY SON TO FOLLOW THE RIGHT PATH.



"GANDHARI WAS BROUGHT TO THE COURT—

O GANDHARI, YOUR WICKED SON IS BENT UPON BRINGING ABOUT TOTAL DESTRUCTION. DISREGARDING THE ADVICE OF ELDERS, HE HAS INSULTED ALL OF US BY STALKING OUT WITHOUT A WORD.



"GANDHARI REPLIED—

O KING, YOU INDULGED YOUR SON TOO MUCH AND ARE HENCE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PRESENT SITUATION.



ON DHRTARASHTRA'S INSTRUCTION VIDURA SUMMONED DURYODHANA BACK INTO COURT.

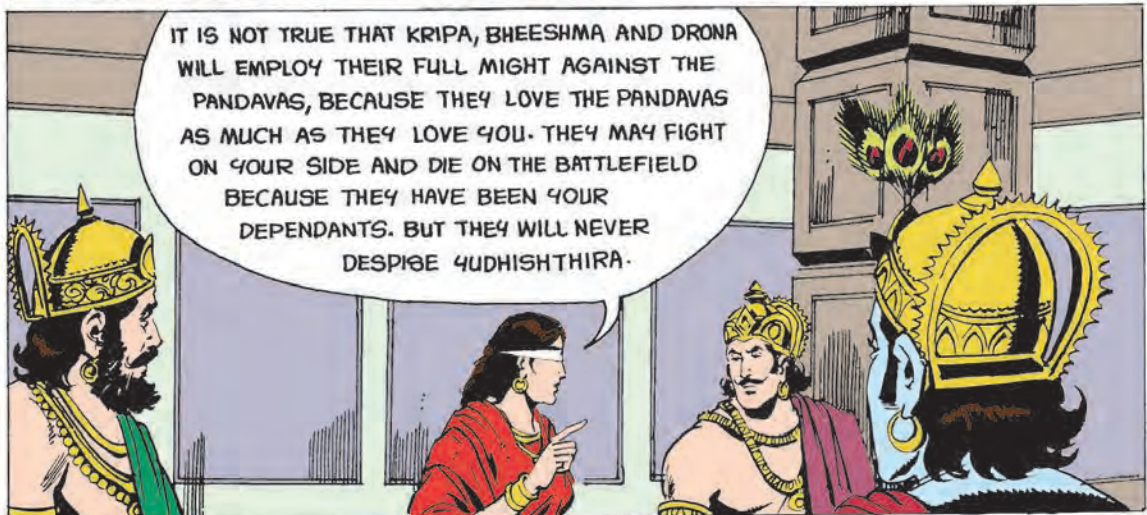


WHEN DURYODHANA ARRIVED—

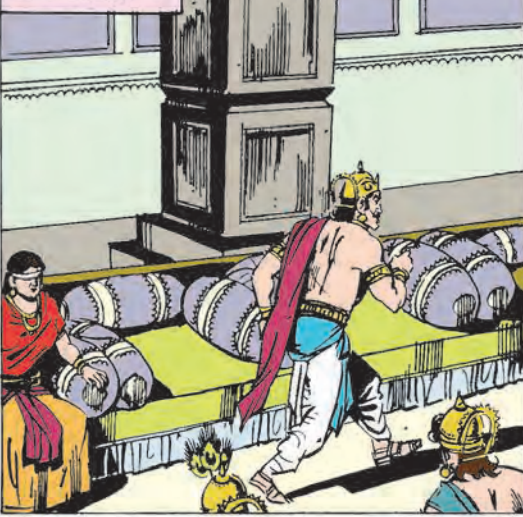
O DURYODHANA, LISTEN TO ME FOR I SPEAK FOR YOUR WELFARE.



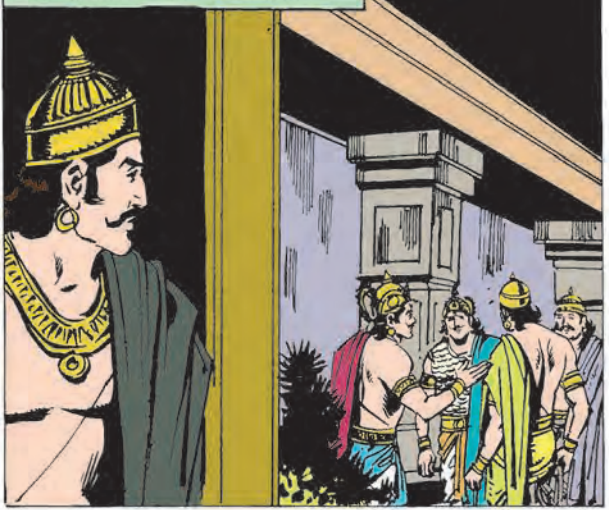
IT IS NOT TRUE THAT KRIPA, BHEESHMA AND DRONA WILL EMPLOY THEIR FULL MIGHT AGAINST THE PANDAVAS, BECAUSE THEY LOVE THE PANDAVAS AS MUCH AS THEY LOVE YOU. THEY MAY FIGHT ON YOUR SIDE AND DIE ON THE BATTLEFIELD BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN YOUR DEPENDANTS. BUT THEY WILL NEVER DESPISE YUDHISHTHIRA.



"DURYODHANA ONCE AGAIN STORMED OUT OF THE COURT."



"THEN HE GOT TOGETHER WITH SHAKUNI, KARNA AND DUHSHASANA..."



"... AND HATCHED A CONSPIRACY."

BEFORE KRISHNA, BHEESHMA AND DHRTIRASHTRA HAVE US ARRESTED, WE MUST TAKE KRISHNA CAPTIVE. IT WILL DEMORALISE AND PARALYSE THE PANDAVAS.



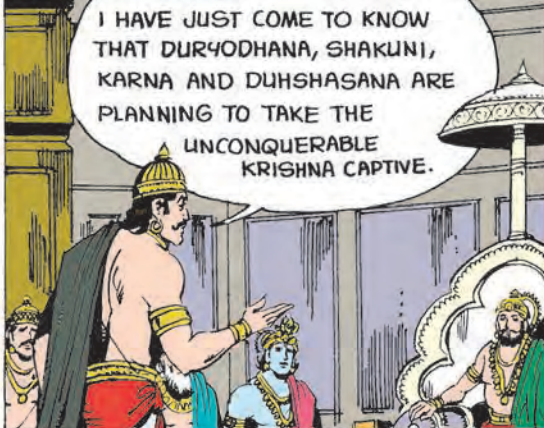
"THE ASTUTE SATYAKI FORESAW THE SCHEME. HE CALLED KRITAVARMAN AND SAID —"

GET OUR TROOPS READY FOR BATTLE. MEANWHILE I SHALL INFORM KRISHNA OF THE CONSPIRACY.

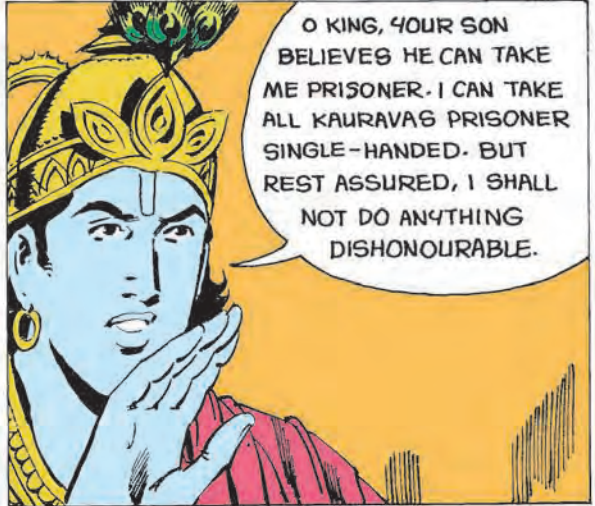


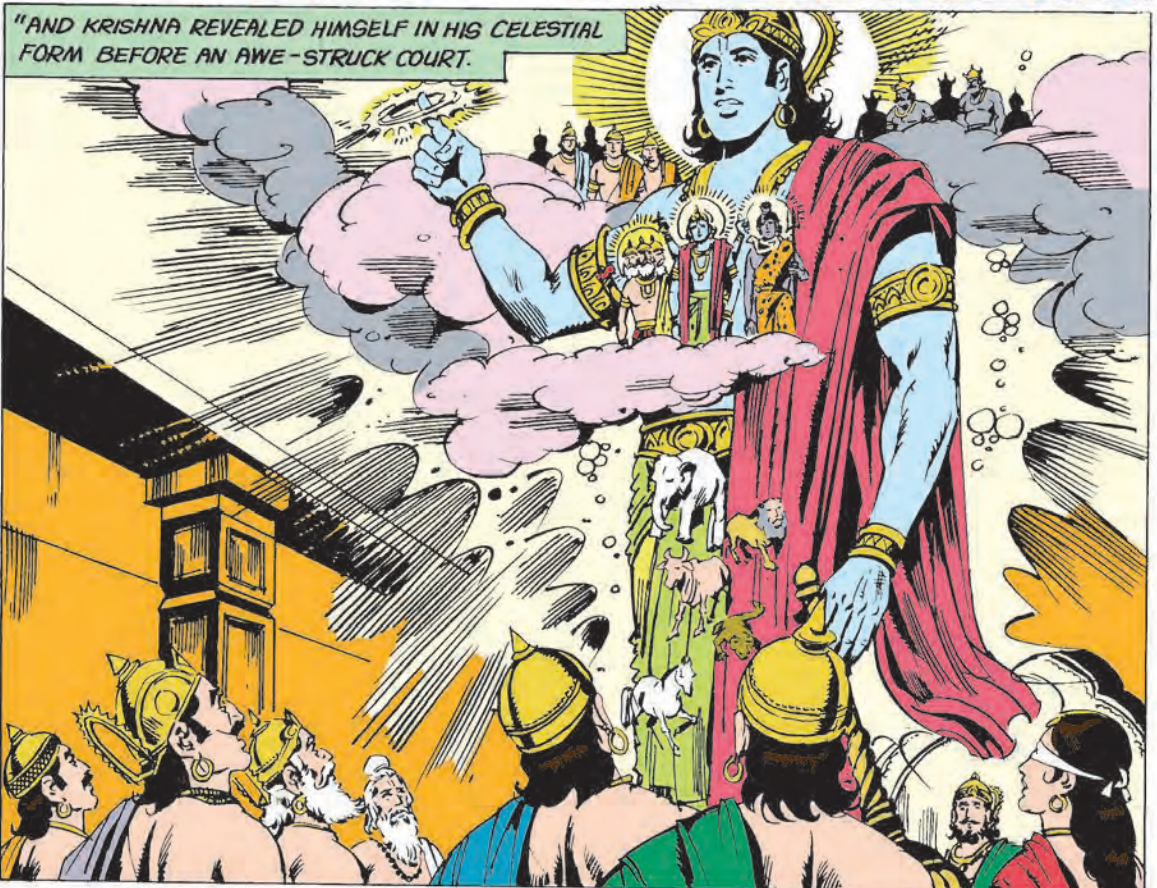
"SATYAKI THEN ENTERED THE KAURAVA COURT AND ANNOUNCED —"

I HAVE JUST COME TO KNOW THAT DURYODHANA, SHAKUNI, KARNA AND DUHSHASANA ARE PLANNING TO TAKE THE UNCONQUERABLE KRISHNA CAPTIVE.

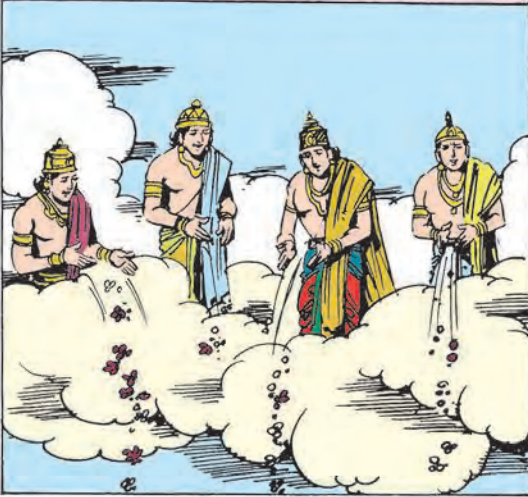


O KING, YOUR SON BELIEVES HE CAN TAKE ME PRISONER. I CAN TAKE ALL KAURAVAS PRISONER SINGLE-HANDED. BUT REST ASSURED, I SHALL NOT DO ANYTHING DISHONOURABLE.





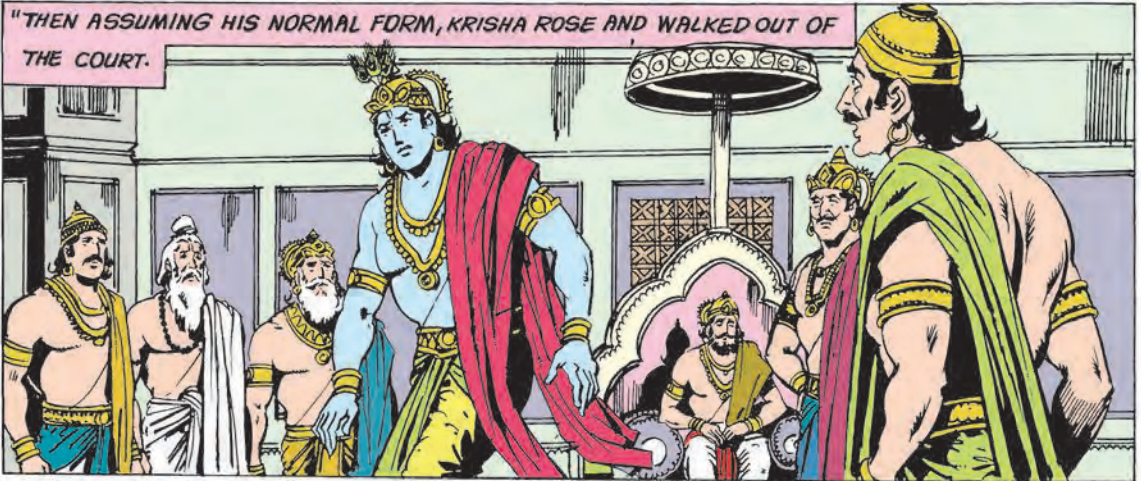
"SEEING THE DIVINE FORM, THE GODS
SHOWERED FLOWERS FROM ABOVE."



"THE WHOLE EARTH TREMBLED AND THE OCEANS
BECAME AGITATED."

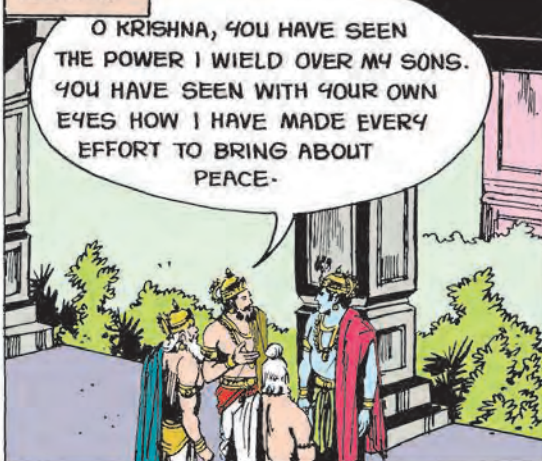


"THEN ASSUMING HIS NORMAL FORM, KRISHNA ROSE AND WALKED OUT OF
THE COURT."



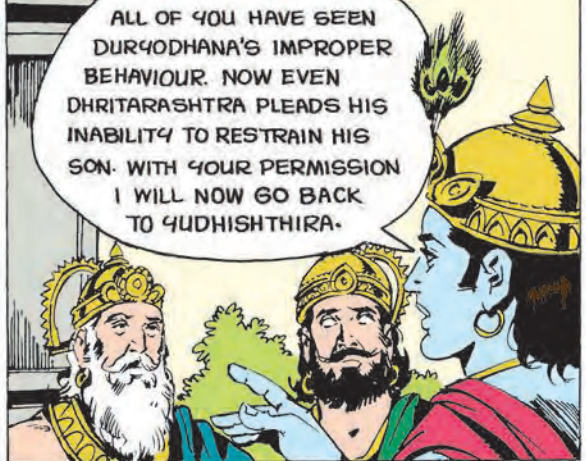
"AT THE GATE, DHRTARASHTRA ADDRESSED
KRISHNA—

O KRISHNA, YOU HAVE SEEN
THE POWER I WIELD OVER MY SONS.
YOU HAVE SEEN WITH YOUR OWN
EYES HOW I HAVE MADE EVERY
EFFORT TO BRING ABOUT
PEACE-



"KRISHNA REPLIED —

ALL OF YOU HAVE SEEN
DURYODHANA'S IMPROPER
BEHAVIOUR. NOW EVEN
DHRTARASHTRA PLEADS HIS
INABILITY TO RESTRAIN HIS
SON. WITH YOUR PERMISSION
I WILL NOW GO BACK
TO GUDHISHTHIRA.



"THEN KRISHNA WENT AND PAID HIS RESPECTS TO KUNTI."

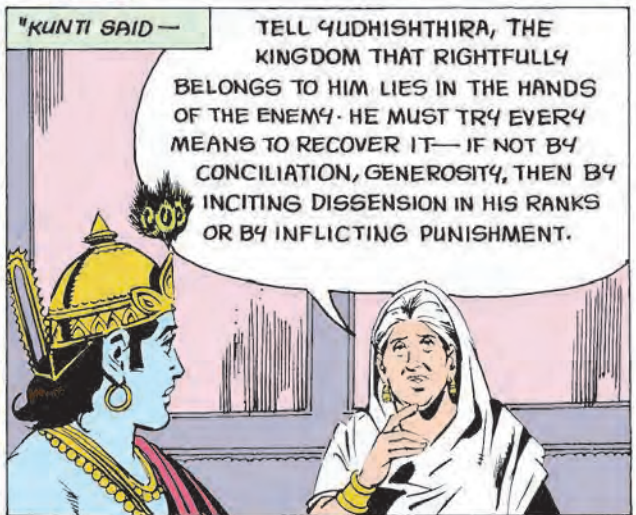


O AUNT, WE TRIED IN VAIN TO PERSUADE DURYODHANA FOR A PEACEFUL UNDERSTANDING. BUT HE REFUSED TO SEE REASON. I AM NOW GOING BACK TO YOUR SONS. DO YOU HAVE ANY MESSAGE FOR THEM ?

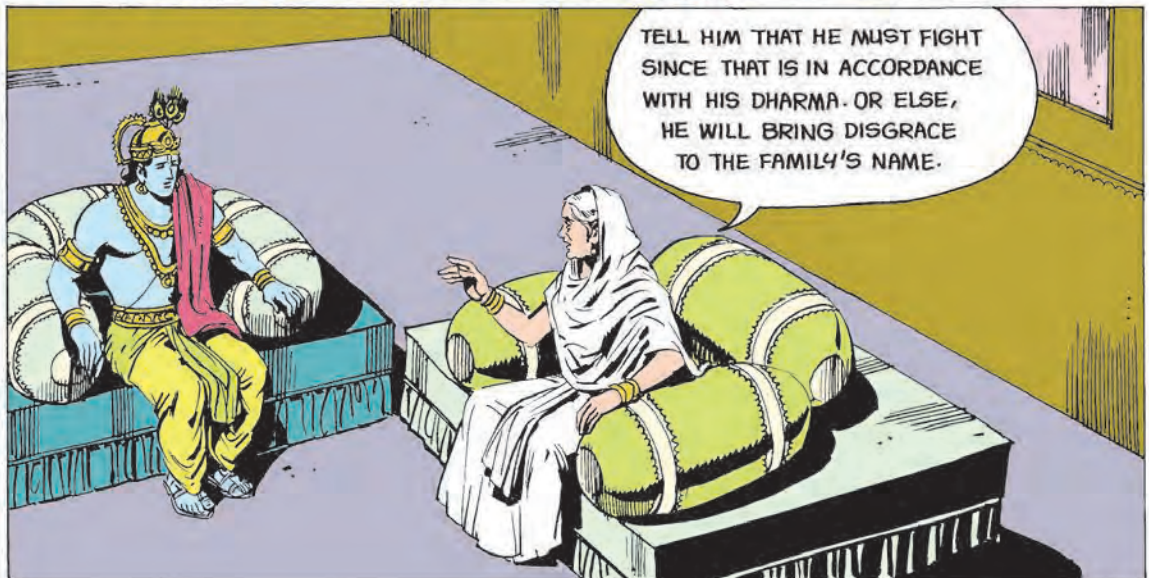


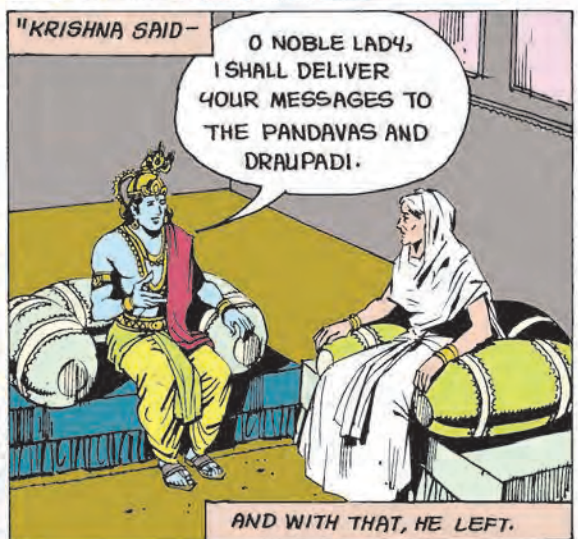
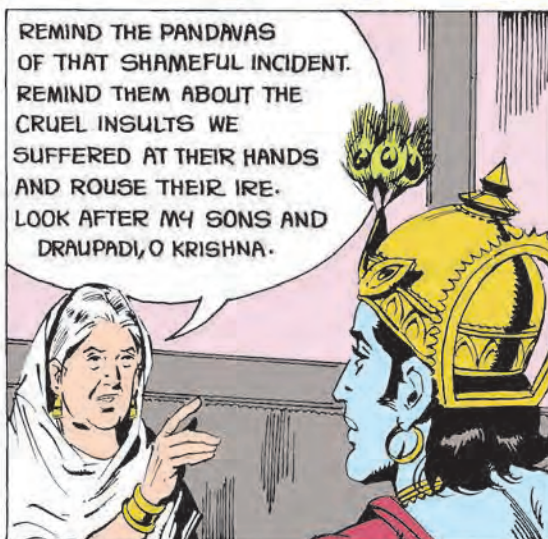
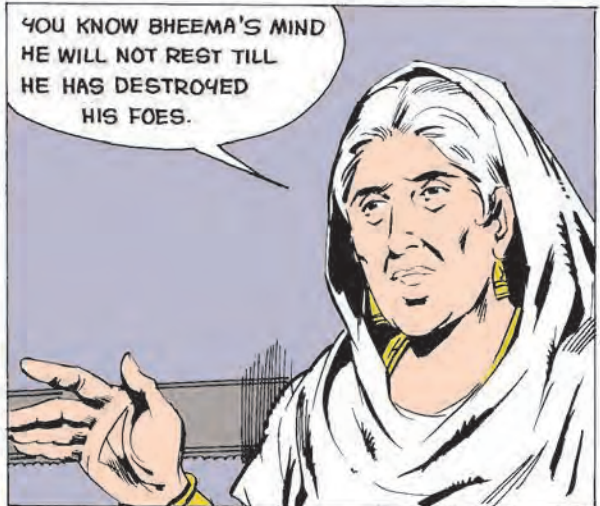
"KUNTI SAID —

TELL YUDHISHTHIRA, THE KINGDOM THAT RIGHTFULLY BELONGS TO HIM LIES IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY. HE MUST TRY EVERY MEANS TO RECOVER IT— IF NOT BY CONCILIATION, GENEROSITY, THEN BY INCITING DISSENSION IN HIS RANKS OR BY INFLECTING PUNISHMENT.

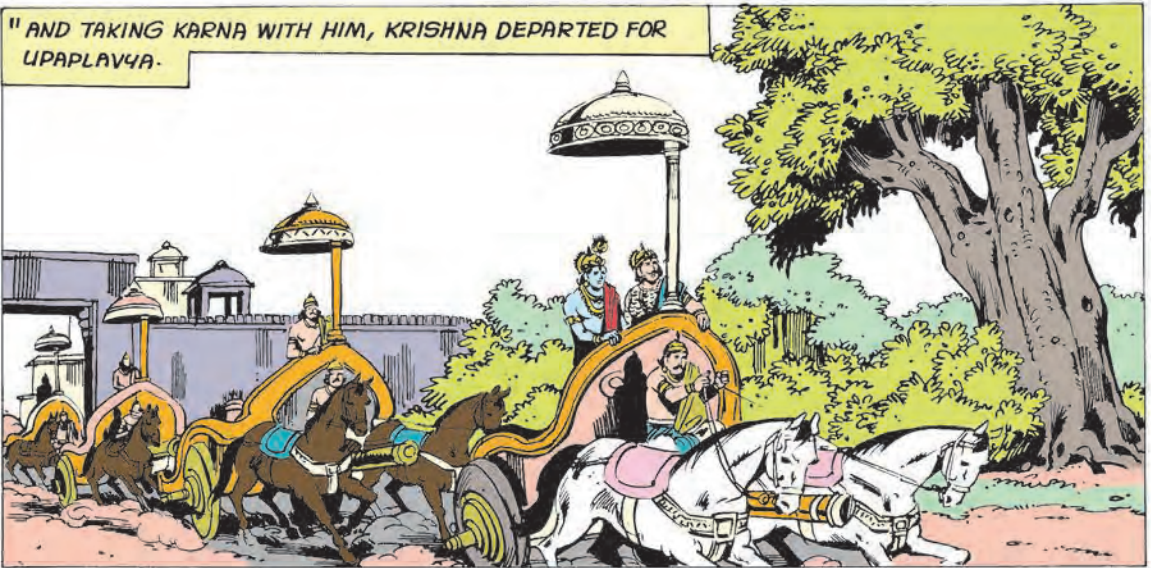


TELL HIM THAT HE MUST FIGHT SINCE THAT IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS DHARMA. OR ELSE, HE WILL BRING DISGRACE TO THE FAMILY'S NAME.

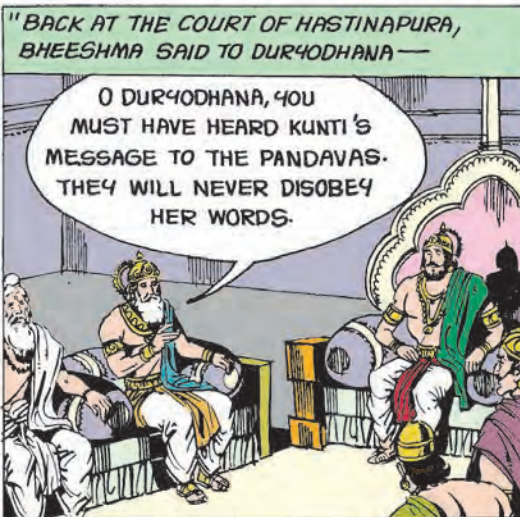




"AND TAKING KARNA WITH HIM, KRISHNA DEPARTED FOR UPAPLAVYA.

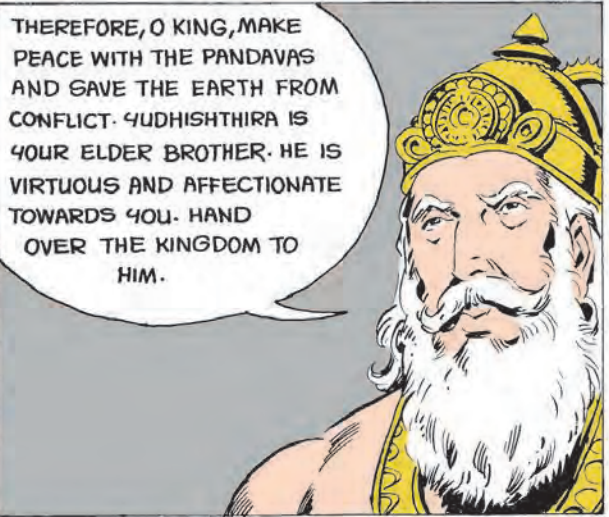


"BACK AT THE COURT OF HASTINAPURA, BHEESHMA SAID TO DURYODHANA —

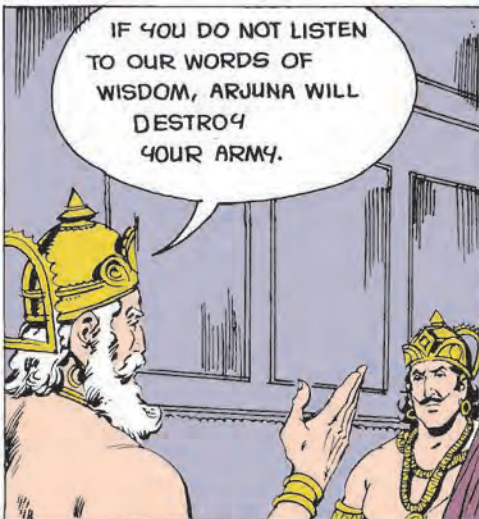


O DURYODHANA, YOU MUST HAVE HEARD KUNTI'S MESSAGE TO THE PANDAVAS. THEY WILL NEVER DISOBEY HER WORDS.

THEREFORE, O KING, MAKE PEACE WITH THE PANDAVAS AND SAVE THE EARTH FROM CONFLICT. YUDHISHTHIRA IS YOUR ELDER BROTHER. HE IS VIRTUOUS AND AFFECTIONATE TOWARDS YOU. HAND OVER THE KINGDOM TO HIM.

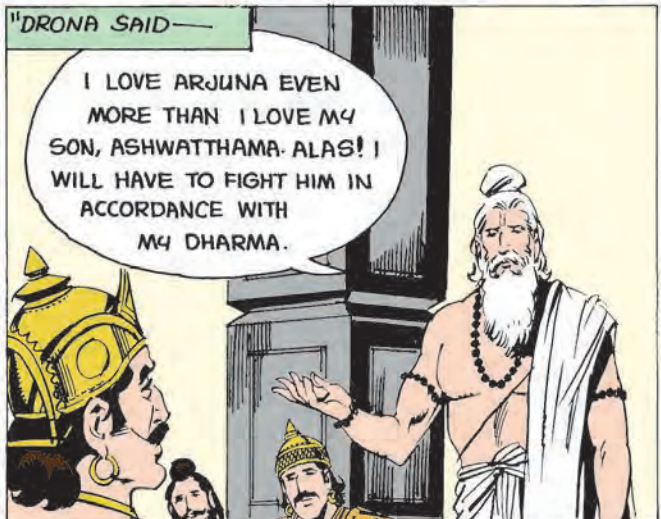


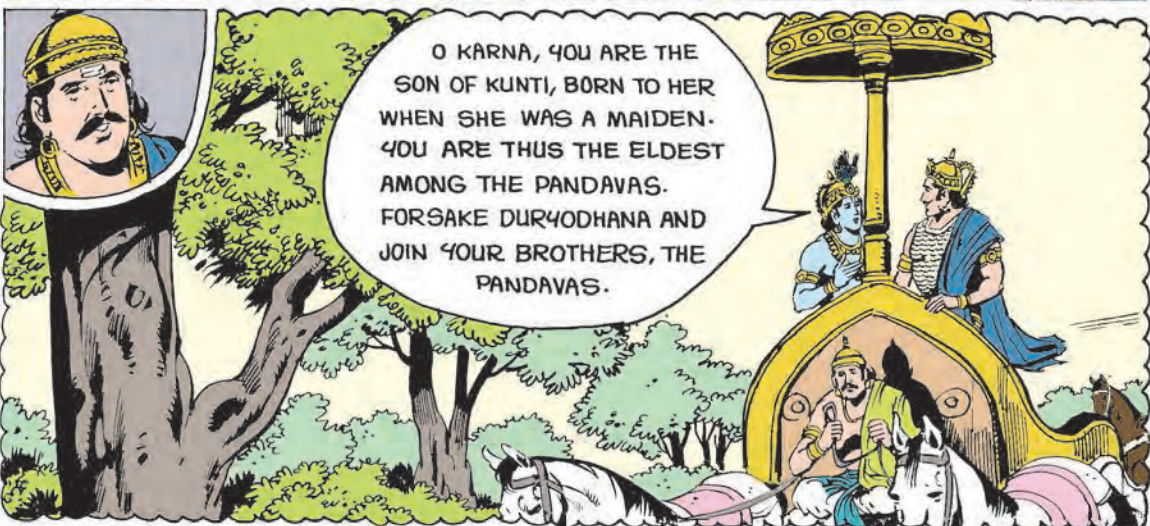
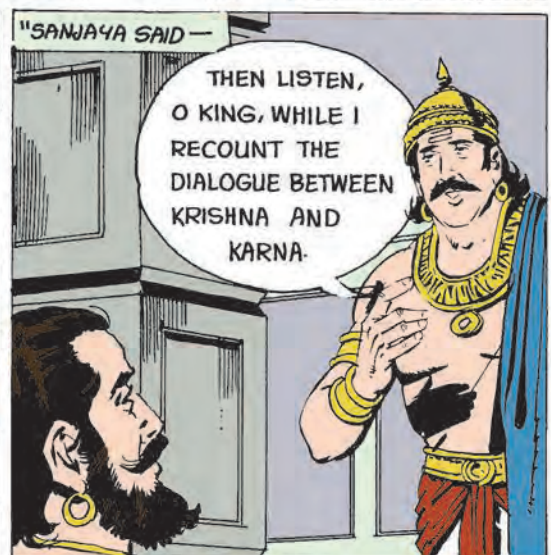
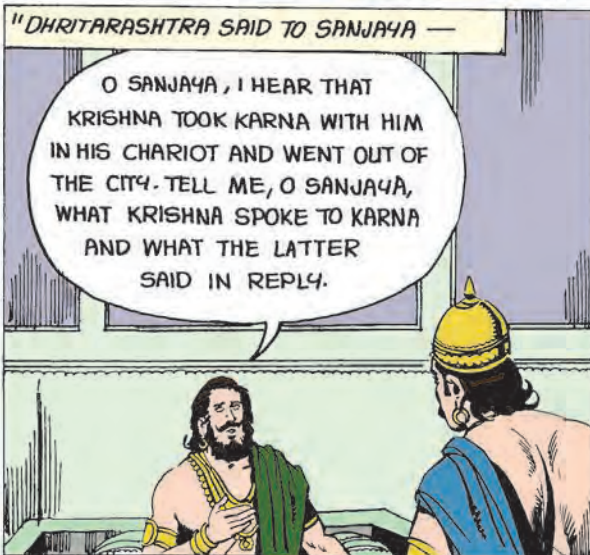
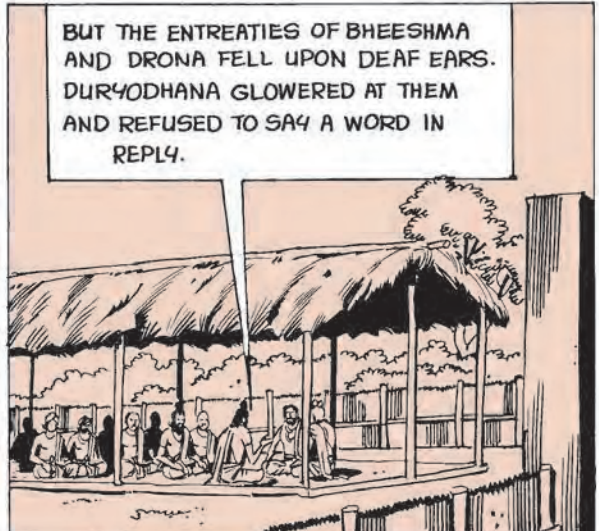
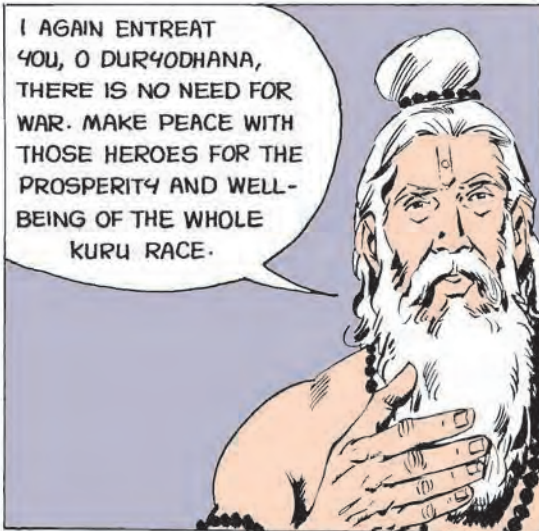
IF YOU DO NOT LISTEN TO OUR WORDS OF WISDOM, ARJUNA WILL DESTROY YOUR ARMY.



"DRONA SAID —

I LOVE ARJUNA EVEN MORE THAN I LOVE MY SON, ASHWATTHAMA. ALAS! I WILL HAVE TO FIGHT HIM IN ACCORDANCE WITH MY DHARMA.



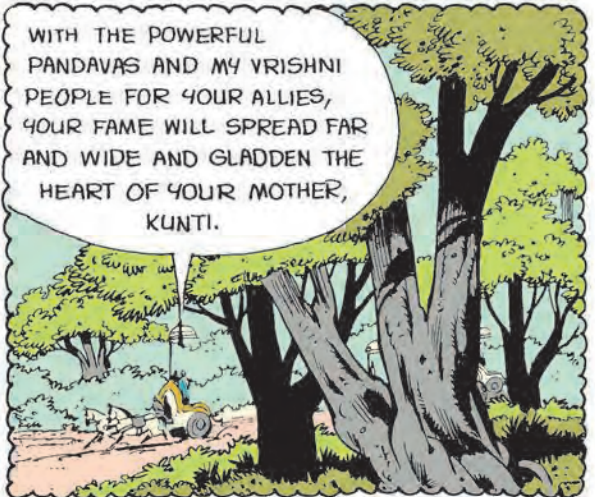


"KRISHNA CONTINUED —

PROCEEDING THIS
VERY DAY WITH ME,
LET US GO AND
BREAK THE GOOD NEWS
TO THE PANDAVAS.
THEY WILL WILLINGLY
ACCEPT YOU AS THEIR
KING AND
RULER.

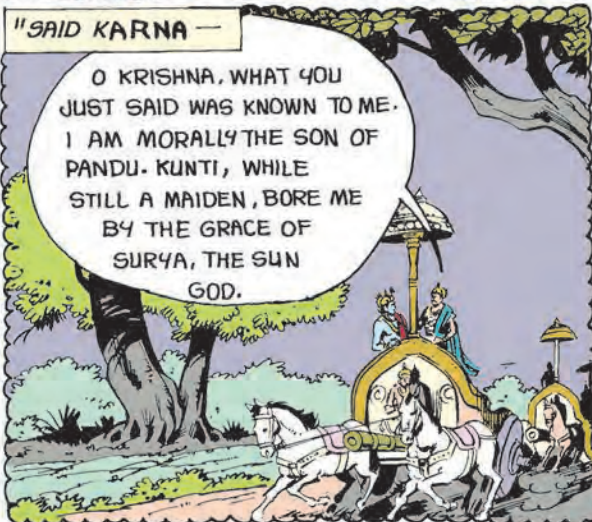


WITH THE POWERFUL
PANDAVAS AND MY VRISHNI
PEOPLE FOR YOUR ALLIES,
YOUR FAME WILL SPREAD FAR
AND WIDE AND GLADDEN THE
HEART OF YOUR MOTHER,
KUNTI.



"SAID KARNA —

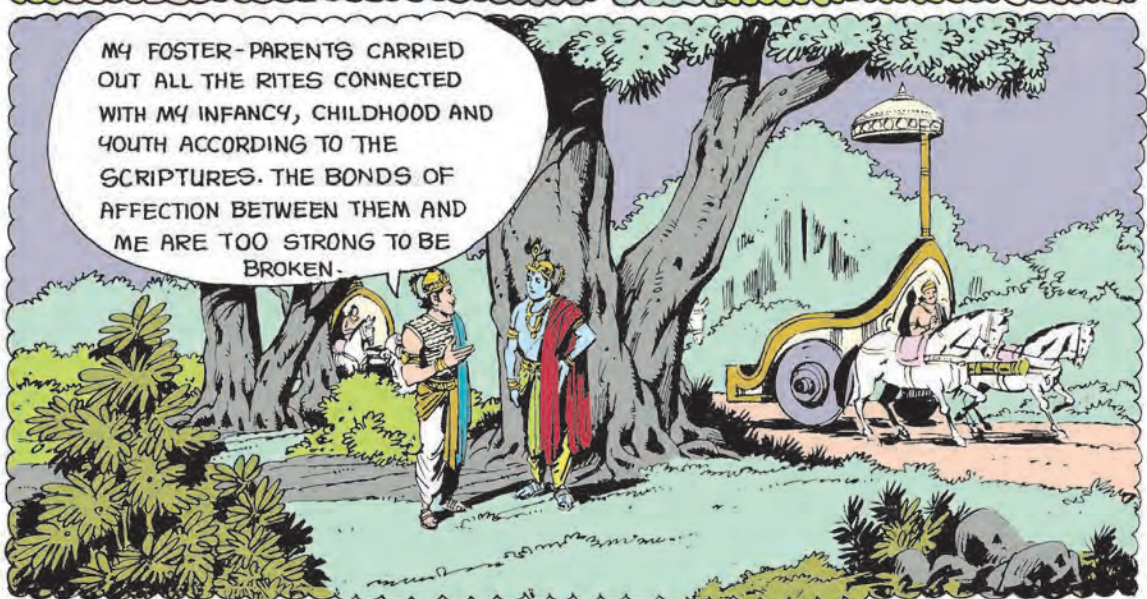
O KRISHNA, WHAT YOU
JUST SAID WAS KNOWN TO ME.
I AM MORALLY THE SON OF
PANDU. KUNTI, WHILE
STILL A MAIDEN, BORE ME
BY THE GRACE OF
SURYA, THE SUN
GOD.

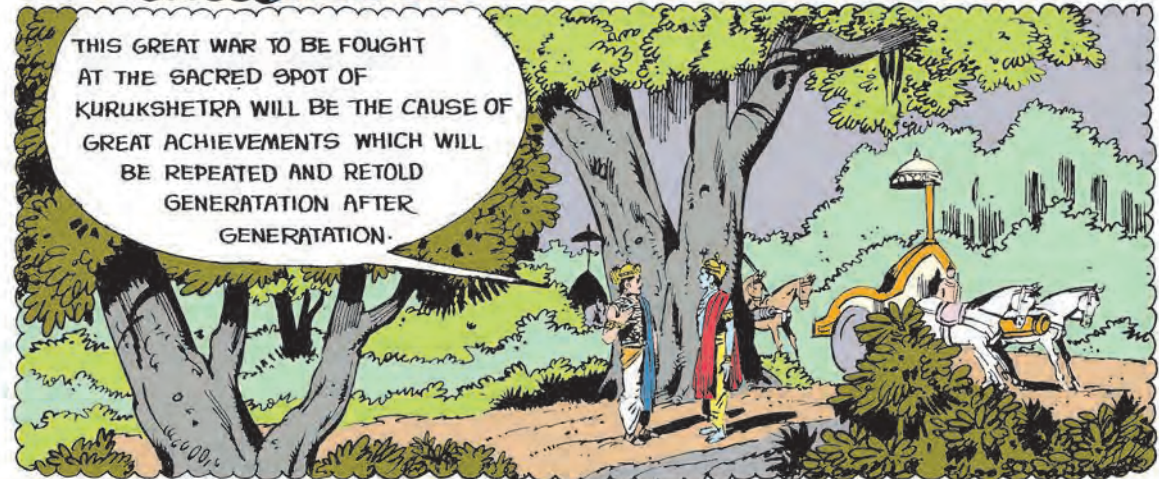
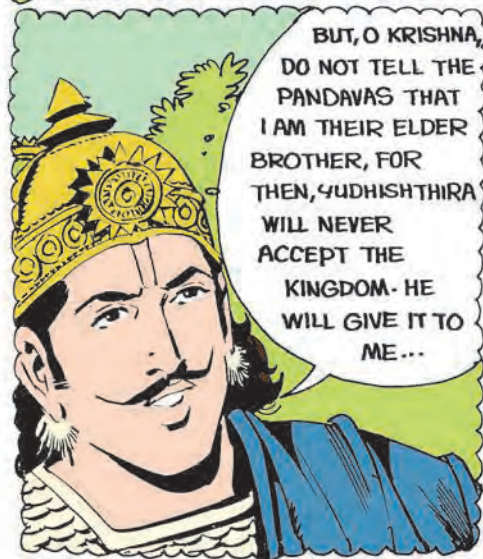
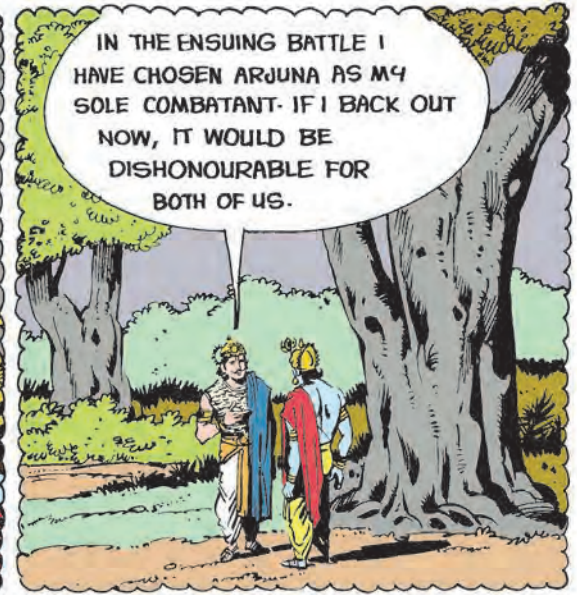


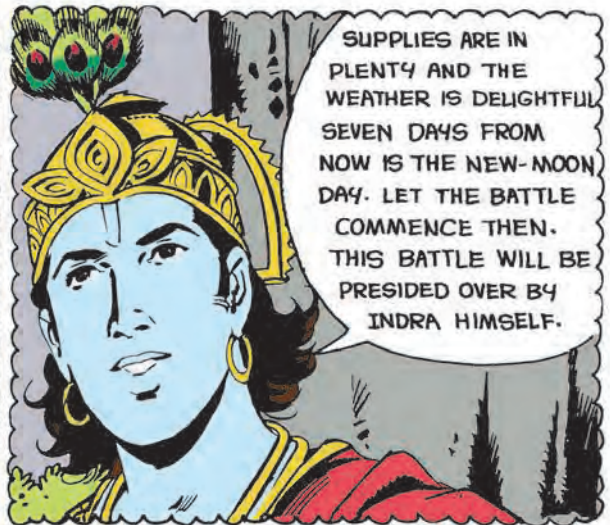
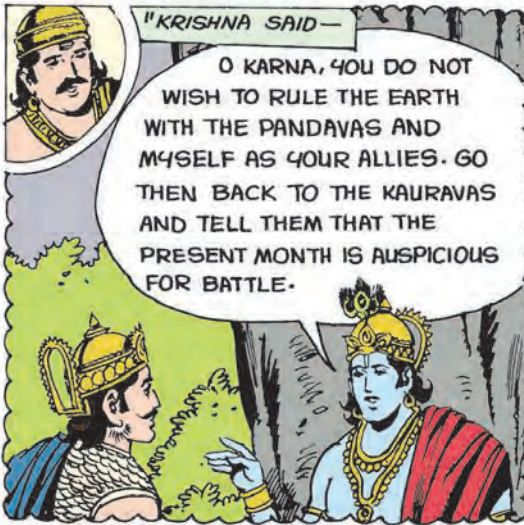
HAVING THUS
BORNE ME, SHE
ABANDONED ME WITHOUT
THINKING ABOUT MY
WELFARE. THE
CHARIOTEER ADHIRATHA
TOOK ME HOME AND
HE AND HIS WIFE
RADHA CARED FOR ME
AS IF I WERE THEIR
OWN SON.



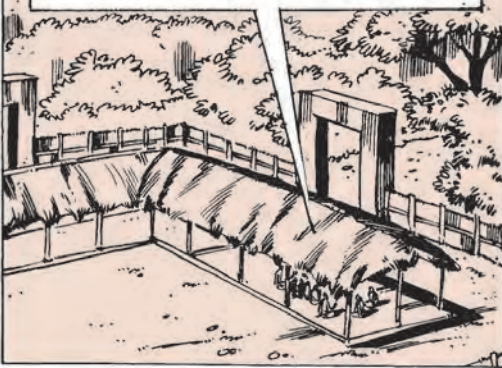
MY FOSTER-PARENTS CARRIED
OUT ALL THE RITES CONNECTED
WITH MY INFANCY, CHILDHOOD AND
YOUTH ACCORDING TO THE
SCRIPTURES. THE BONDS OF
AFFECTION BETWEEN THEM AND
ME ARE TOO STRONG TO BE
BROKEN.







MEANWHILE, BACK IN HASTINAPURA, VIDURA INFORMED KUNTI OF THE FAILURE OF KRISHNA'S MISSION AS A RESULT OF DURYODHANA'S OBSTINACY.



"KUNTI BEMOANED—

OF WHAT USE ARE WEALTH AND POWER GAINED THROUGH LARGE-SCALE DESTRUCTION? THE FACT THAT BHEESHMA, DRONA AND KARNA WILL JOIN THE RANKS OF THE KAURAVAS FILLS ME WITH GREATER FEAR.



BHEESHMA AND DRONA WILL NOT WILLINGLY SLAY THE PANDAVAS WHO ARE VERY DEAR TO THEM. BUT KARNA? HE IS MIGHTY AND WILL SURELY TRY TO KILL MY SONS. I WILL GO AND APPEAL TO HIM AS A MOTHER.



"SO KUNTI ARRIVED ON THE BANKS OF THE GANGA WHERE KARNA WAS WORSHIPPING SURYA, THE SUN GOD.



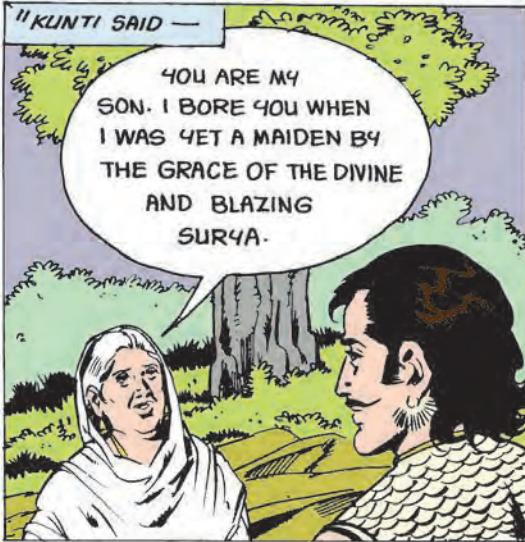
"HAVING FINISHED HIS PRAYERS, KARNA TURNED AND SAW KUNTI. HE BOWED TO HER AND SAID—

I AM KARNA, THE SON OF RADHA AND ADHIRATHA. TELL ME, O LADY, WHAT I CAN DO FOR YOU.



"KUNTI SAID —

YOU ARE MY SON. I BORE YOU WHEN I WAS YET A MAIDEN BY THE GRACE OF THE DIVINE AND BLAZING SURYA.



"JUST THEN, SURYA'S VOICE RANG OUT FROM THE HEAVENS.

O KARNA, KUNTI IS RIGHT. SHE IS YOUR MOTHER. FOLLOW HER WORDS AND BE WITH VIRTUE.

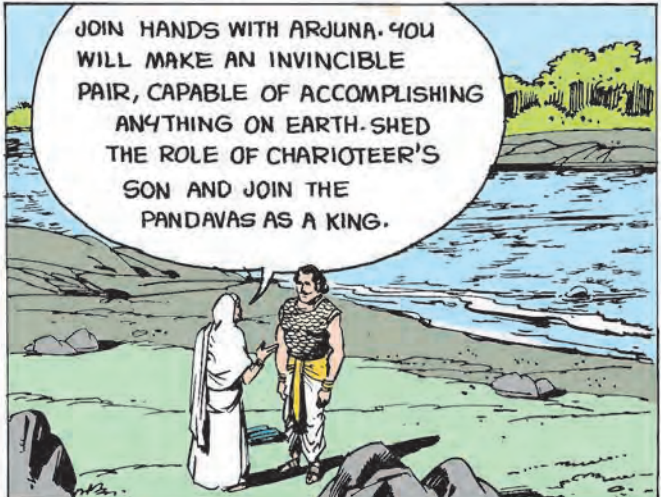


"KUNTI CONTINUED —

O KARNA, BEING MY SON, IT IS NOT PROPER FOR YOU TO SERVE DURYODHANA.

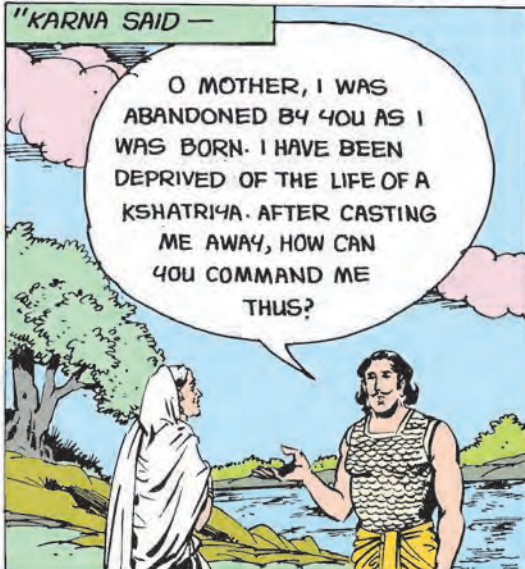


JOIN HANDS WITH ARJUNA. YOU WILL MAKE AN INVINCIBLE PAIR, CAPABLE OF ACCOMPLISHING ANYTHING ON EARTH. SHED THE ROLE OF CHARIOTEER'S SON AND JOIN THE PANDAVAS AS A KING.

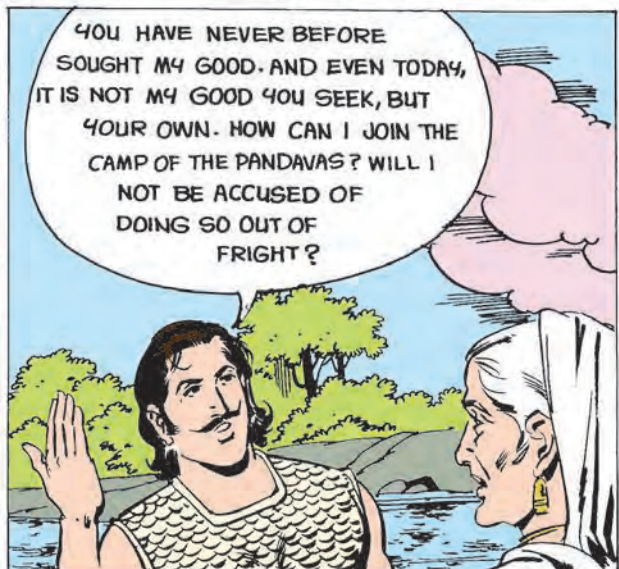


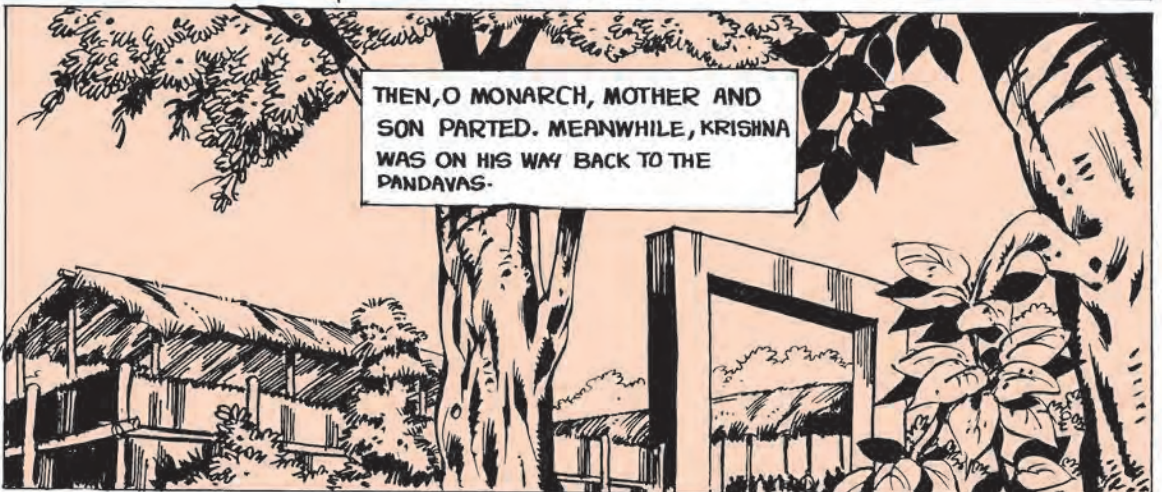
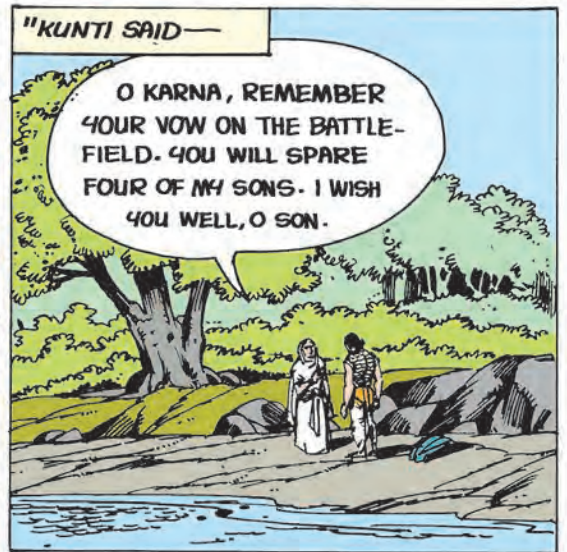
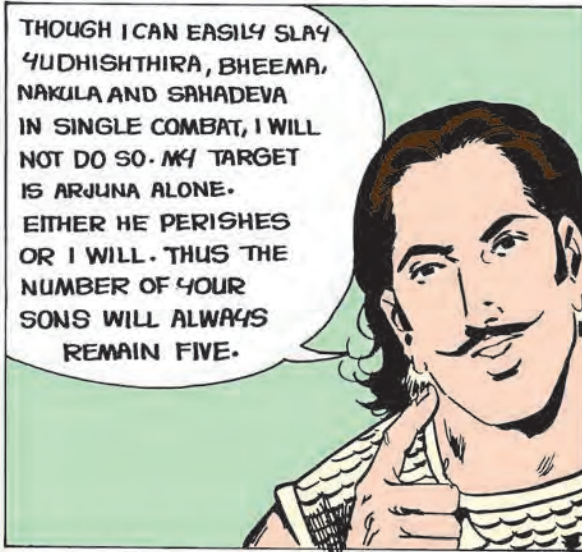
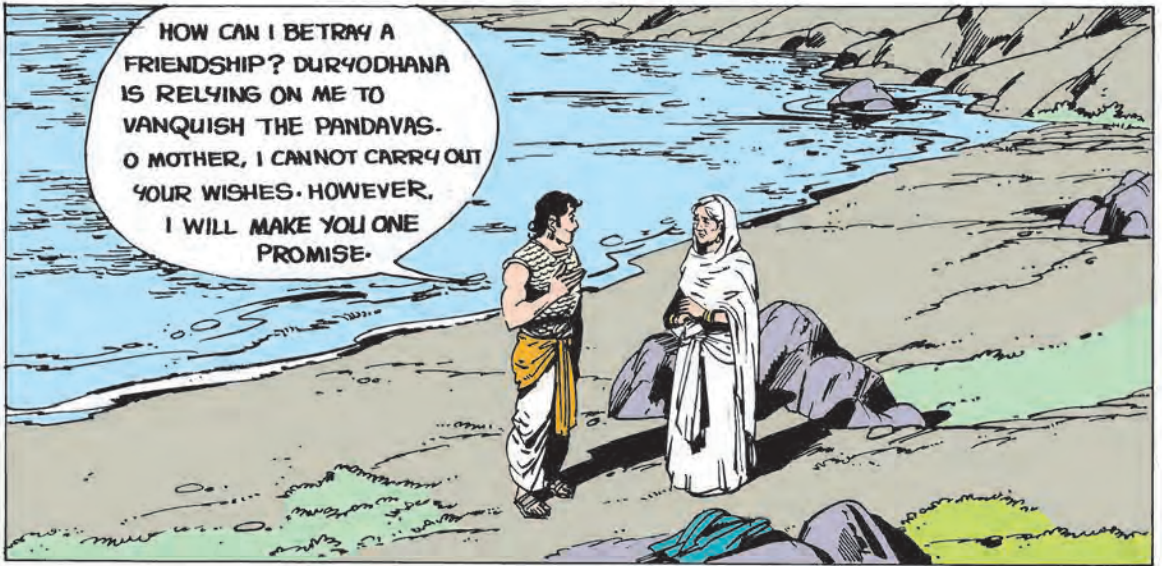
"KARNA SAID —

O MOTHER, I WAS ABANDONED BY YOU AS I WAS BORN. I HAVE BEEN DEPRIVED OF THE LIFE OF A KSHATRIYA. AFTER CASTING ME AWAY, HOW CAN YOU COMMAND ME THUS?

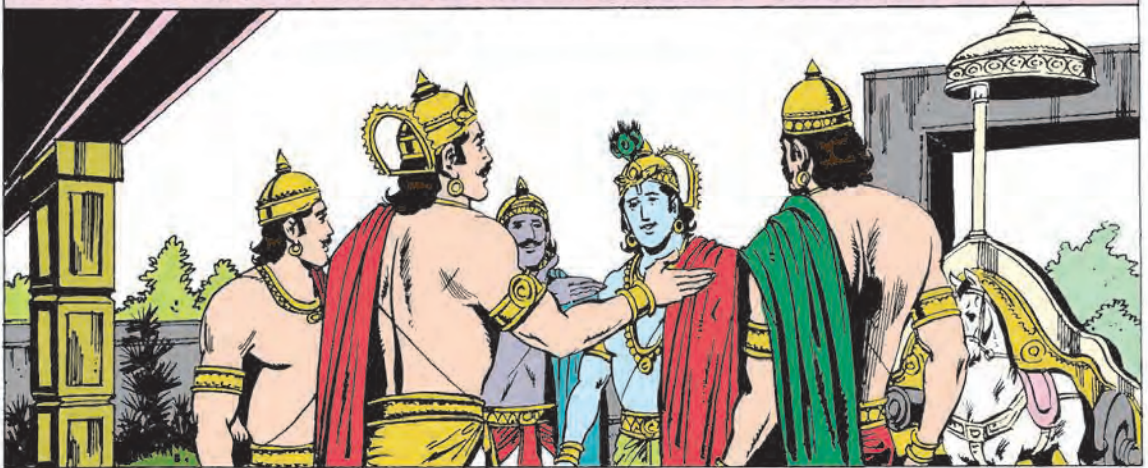


YOU HAVE NEVER BEFORE SOUGHT MY GOOD. AND EVEN TODAY, IT IS NOT MY GOOD YOU SEEK, BUT YOUR OWN. HOW CAN I JOIN THE CAMP OF THE PANDAVAS? WILL I NOT BE ACCUSED OF DOING SO OUT OF FRIGHT?

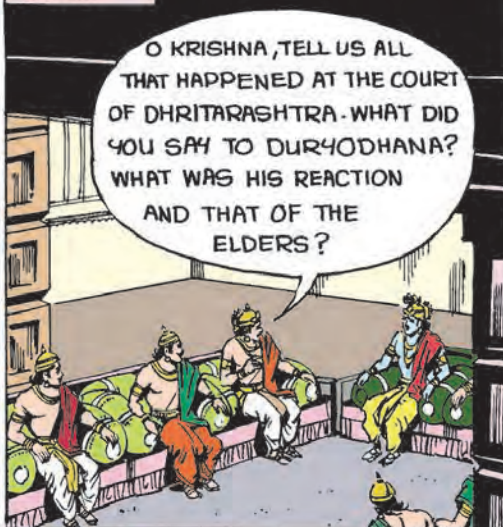




"ARRIVING AT UPAPLAYA, KRISHNA WAS GIVEN AN AFFECTIONATE WELCOME BY THE PANDAVAS."

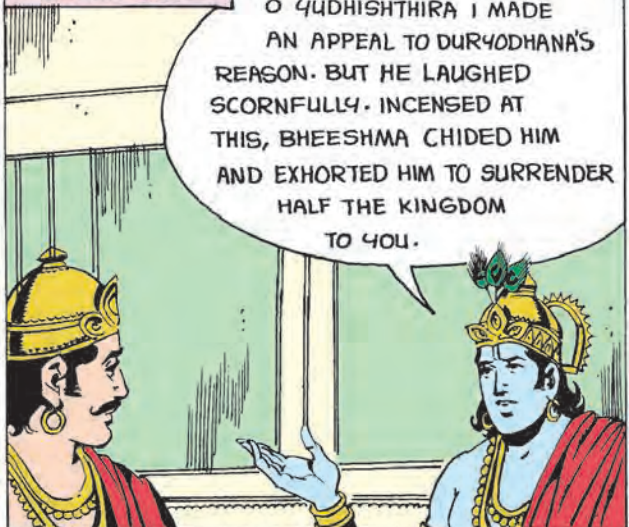


"LATER —



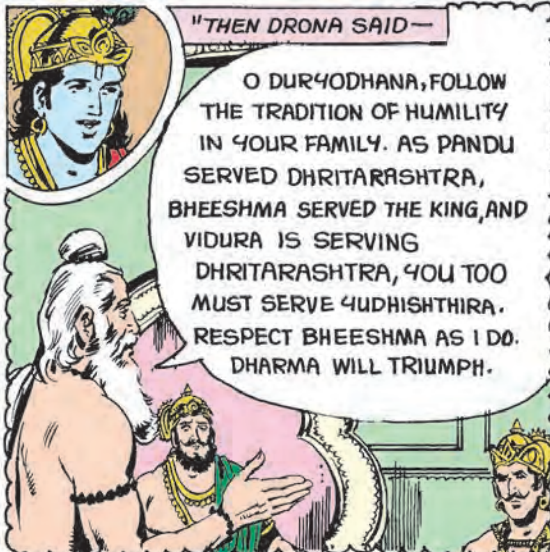
O KRISHNA, TELL US ALL THAT HAPPENED AT THE COURT OF DHRITARASHTRA. WHAT DID YOU SAY TO DURYODHANA? WHAT WAS HIS REACTION AND THAT OF THE ELDERS?

"KRISHNA SAID —



O YUDHISHTHIRA I MADE AN APPEAL TO DURYODHANA'S REASON. BUT HE LAUGHED SCORNFULLY. INCENSED AT THIS, BHEESHMA CHIDED HIM AND EXHORTED HIM TO SURRENDER HALF THE KINGDOM TO YOU.

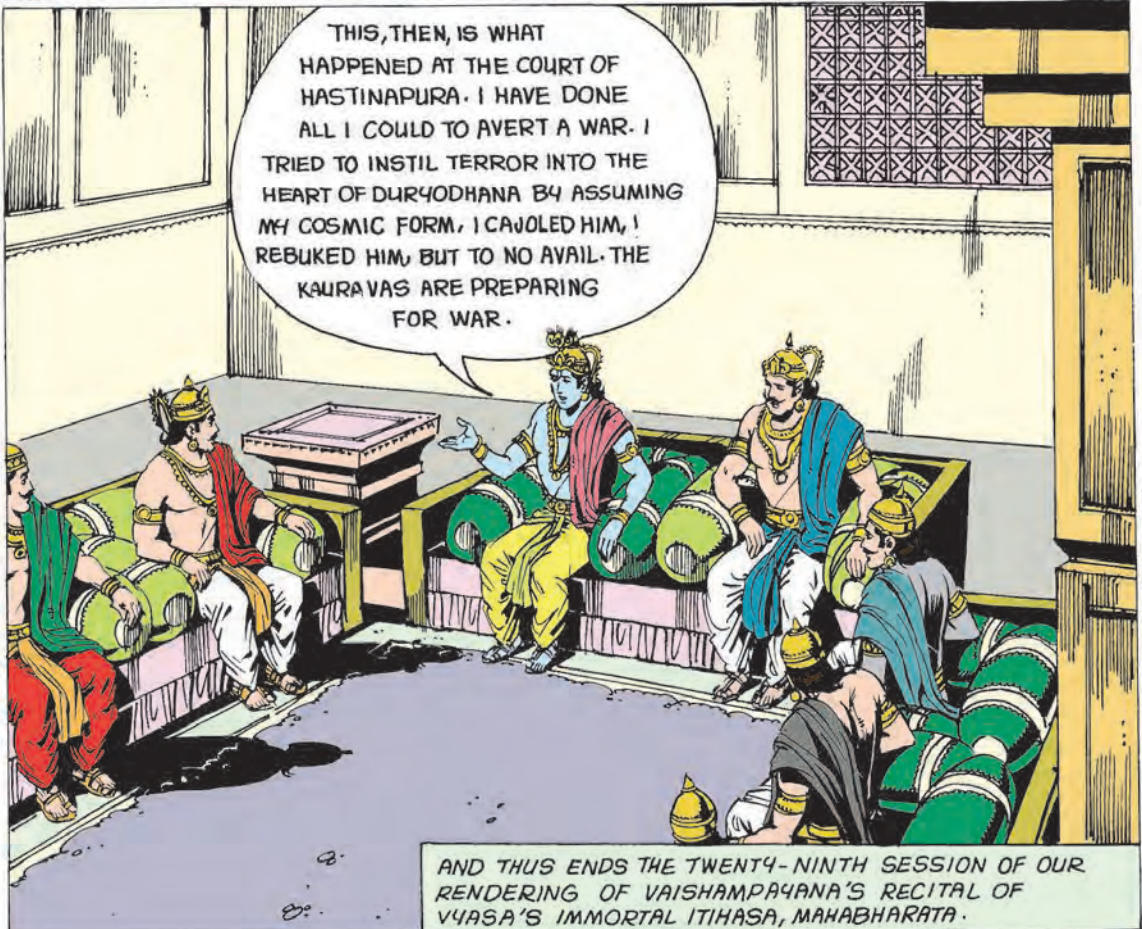
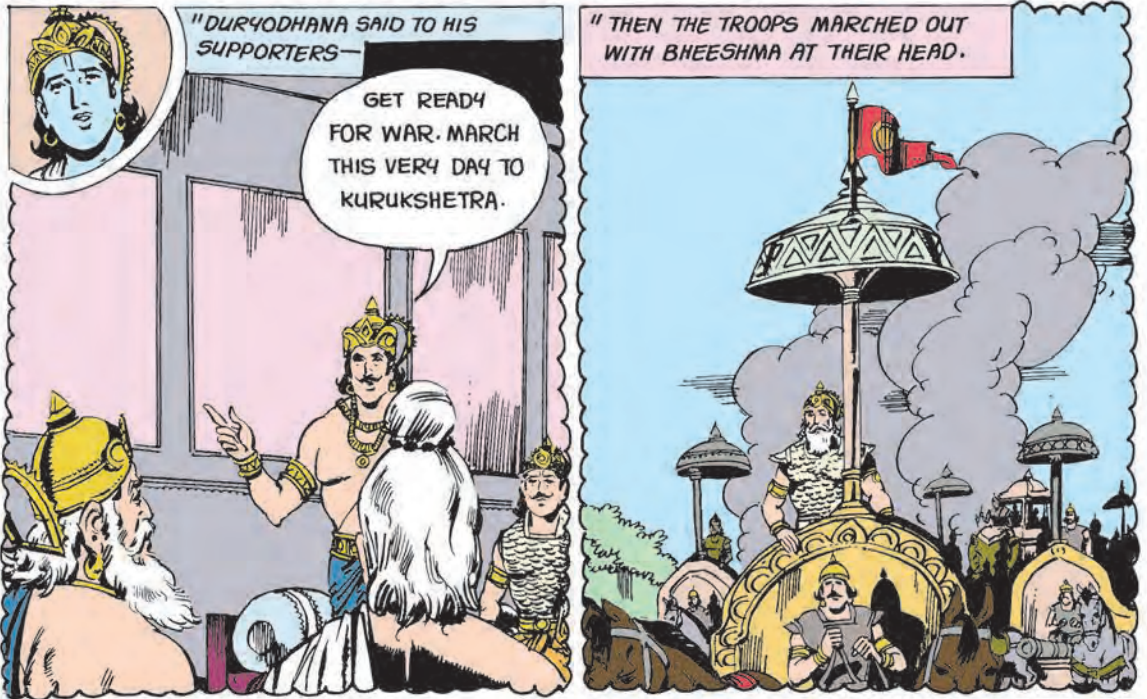
"THEN DRONA SAID —



O DURYODHANA, FOLLOW THE TRADITION OF HUMILITY IN YOUR FAMILY. AS PANDU SERVED DHRITARASHTRA, BHEESHMA SERVED THE KING, AND VIDURA IS SERVING DHRITARASHTRA, YOU TOO MUST SERVE YUDHISHTHIRA. RESPECT BHEESHMA AS I DO. DHARMA WILL TRIUMPH.

"BUT DURYODHANA WOULD NOT YIELD. THE WORDS OF DHRITARASHTRA AND GANDHARI ALSO PROVED IN VAIN.





Mahabharata - 30

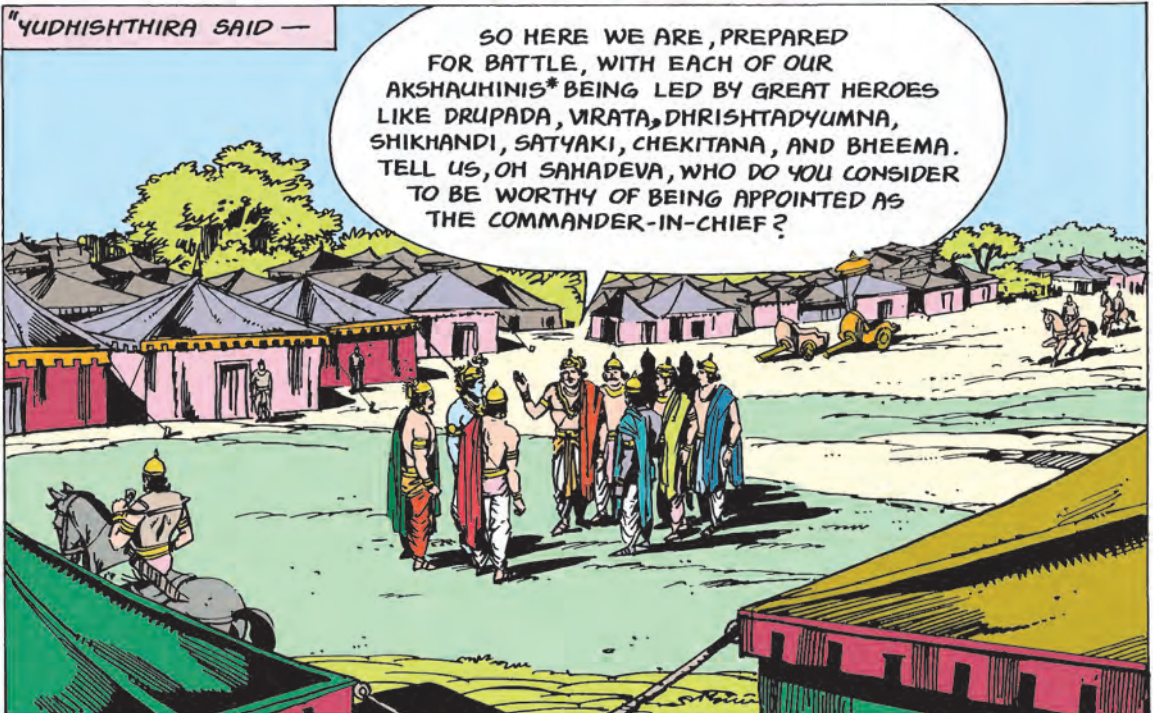
THE WAR BEGINS

O MONARCH, WHEN KRISHNA REPORTED ON THE FAILURE OF HIS PEACE MISSION AT THE COURT OF HASTINAPURA, YUDHISHTHIRA BEGAN PREPARATIONS FOR WAR.



"YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —

SO HERE WE ARE, PREPARED FOR BATTLE, WITH EACH OF OUR AKSHAUHNIS* BEING LED BY GREAT HEROES LIKE DRUPADA, VIRATA, DHRISTADYUMNA, SHIKHANDI, SATYAKI, CHEKITANA, AND BHEEMA. TELL US, OH SAHADEVA, WHO DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE WORTHY OF BEING APPOINTED AS THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF?



* A COMPLETE ARMY CONSISTING OF 21870 ELEPHANTS, 21870 CHARIOTS, 65610 CAVALRY AND 109350 INFANTRY

"SAID SAHADEVA *—

IN MY OPINION, VIRATA
THE MIGHTY KING OF MATSYA
SHOULD BE THE COMMANDER-
IN-CHIEF OF OUR FORCES.



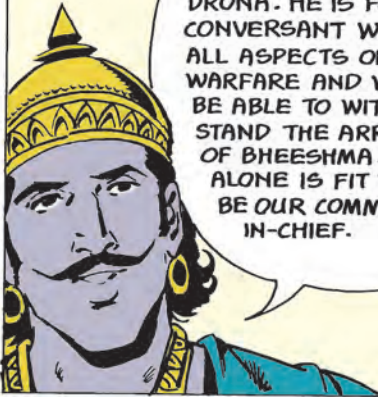
"NAKULA SAID —

DRUPADA SHOULD
BE OUR
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.



"ARJUNA SAID —

DHRISHTADYUMNA
IS DESTINED TO KILL
DRONA. HE IS FULLY
CONVERSANT WITH
ALL ASPECTS OF
WARFARE AND WILL
BE ABLE TO WITH-
STAND THE ARROWS
OF BHEESHMA. HE
ALONE IS FIT TO
BE OUR COMMANDER
IN-CHIEF.



"BHEEMA SAID —

SHIKHANDI IS BORN
TO KILL BHEESHMA.
HENCE SHIKHANDI SHOULD
BE OUR COMMANDER-IN-
CHIEF.



"YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —

KRISHNA IS ALL-KNOWING.
HE IS AWARE OF OUR
STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES.
SO LET HIM NAME OUR
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.



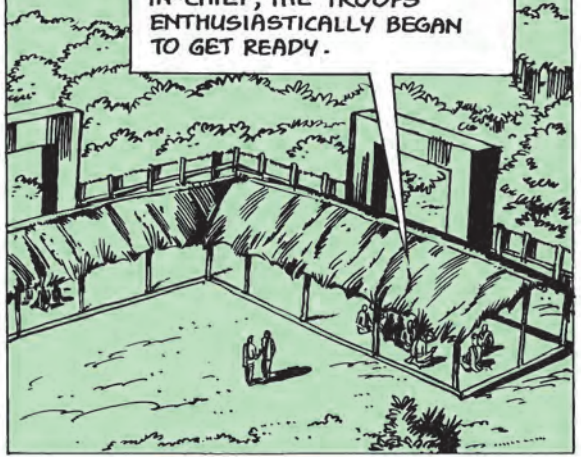
* IN THE OLDEN DAYS, IT WAS THE PRACTICE TO ASCERTAIN THE VIEWS OF THE YOUNGER PEOPLE BEFORE CONSULTING THE ELDERS

"KRISHNA SAID —

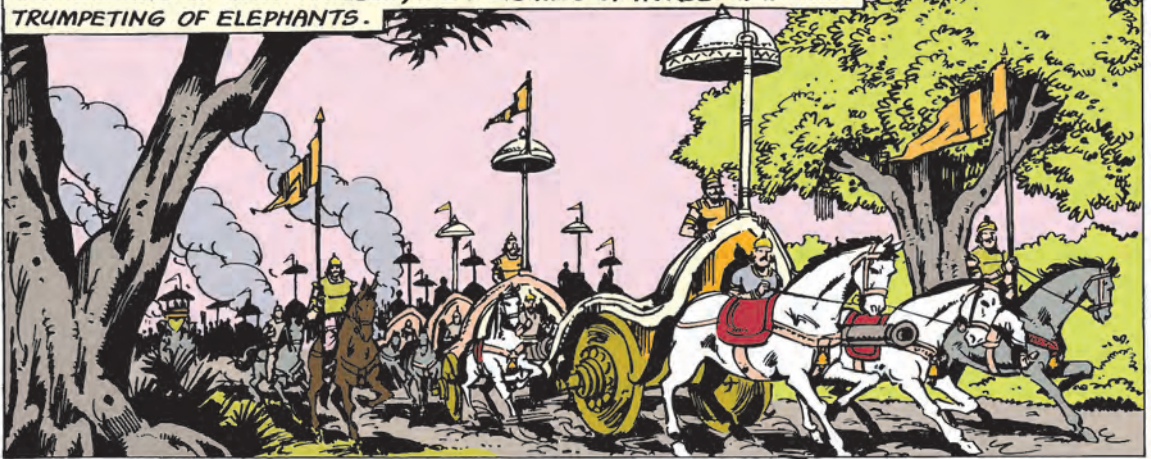
O KING, I FULLY APPROVE OF THE HEROES YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO LEAD YOUR SEVEN AKSHAUHNIS. AS FOR THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF I THINK THE CHOICE OF DHRISHTA-DYUMNA IS THE RIGHT ONE.



O KING, ONCE KRISHNA HAD NAMED THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, THE TROOPS ENTHUSIASTICALLY BEGAN TO GET READY.



"AS THE PANDAVA ARMY IN MARTIAL ARRAY SET OUT FOR KURUKSHETRA, THE ATMOSPHERE RESOUNDED WITH THE LION-ROAR OF WARRIORS, THE BLOWING OF CONCH SHELLS, THE NEIGHING OF HORSES AND THE TRUMPETING OF ELEPHANTS.



"WHEN THEY REACHED A COOL AND SHADY STRETCH OF FLAT LAND, YUDHISHTHIRA SIGNALLLED THE ARMY TO STOP.

WE SHALL CAMP HERE.



"AND SO, THE PANDAVA ARMY PITCHED TENTS AND CAMPED THERE.



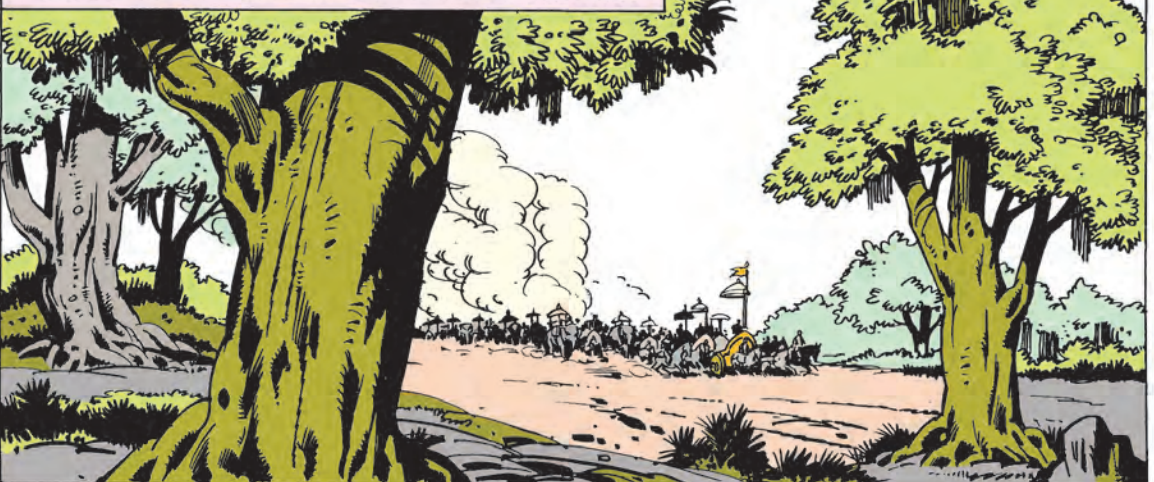
"MEANWHILE, AT HASTINAPURA, DURYODHANA CALLED KARNA, DUHSHASANA AND SHAKUNI AND SAID —

HAVING FAILED IN HIS PEACE MISSION, KRISHNA IS SURE TO INCITE THE PANDAVAS TO FIGHT. THEIR ALLIES, VIRATA AND DRUPADA, ARE OUR OLD ENEMIES. HENCE THIS WAR IS GOING TO BE A VERY FEARSOME ONE.

SO LET US PREPARE FOR WAR IMMEDIATELY. LET OUR ALLIES WITH THEIR ARMIES PROCEED TO KURUKSHETRA AND CAMP THERE.

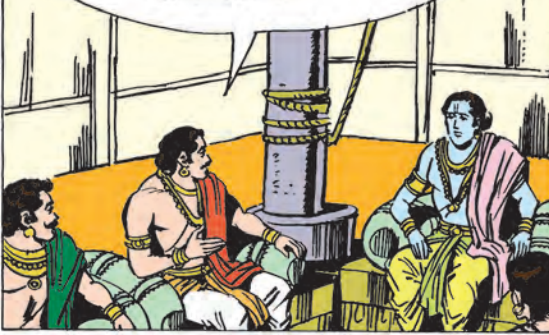
LET THE ROADS FROM OUR CITY TO THE CAMP BE LEVELLED. LET THE TENTS BE WELL-EQUIPPED WITH ARMS AND WEAPONS AND DECKED WITH STREAMERS AND FLAGS.

"AND SO, DURYODHANA'S FORCES GOT READY AND SET OFF FOR THE BATTLE-FIELD OF KURUKSHETRA.



"ON THE EVE OF THE BATTLE, THE PANDAVAS SPENT LONG HOURS IN DISCUSSION."

O KRISHNA, WHAT DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE OUR STANCE IN THE PRESENT SITUATION? WHAT DO YOU FEEL WE SHOULD DO SO THAT WE DO NOT STRAY FROM THE PATH OF DHARMA*.



"KRISHNA SAID —

O YUDHISHTHIRA, DURYODHANA IS BEING UNJUST TO YOU. YOU HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO DECLARE WAR.



"THE PANDAVA WARRIORS WERE JUBILANT AT THIS STATEMENT OF KRISHNA'S."



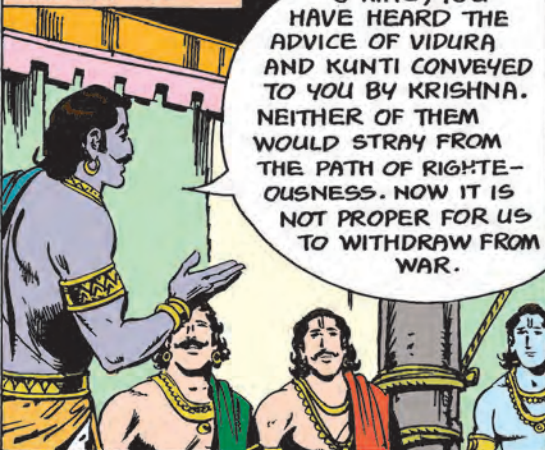
"BUT YUDHISHTHIRA SIGNED."

MUCH AS I HAVE TRIED TO AVOID IT, THAT WE MUST FIGHT OUR KINSMEN AND ELDERS SEEMS INEVITABLE.



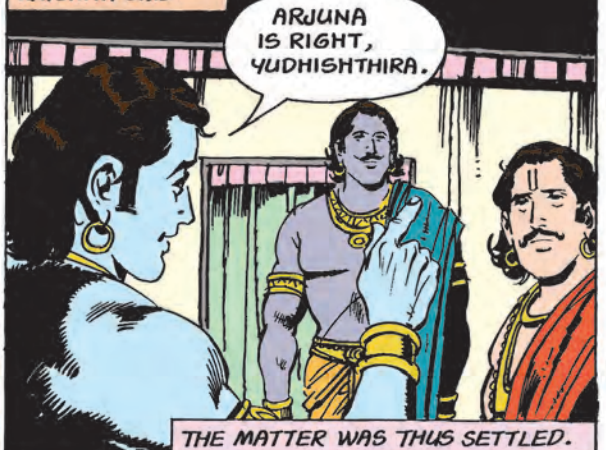
"ARJUNA SAID —

O KING, YOU HAVE HEARD THE ADVICE OF VIDURA AND KUNTI CONVEYED TO YOU BY KRISHNA. NEITHER OF THEM WOULD STRAY FROM THE PATH OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. NOW IT IS NOT PROPER FOR US TO WITHDRAW FROM WAR.



"KRISHNA SAID —

ARJUNA IS RIGHT, YUDHISHTHIRA.

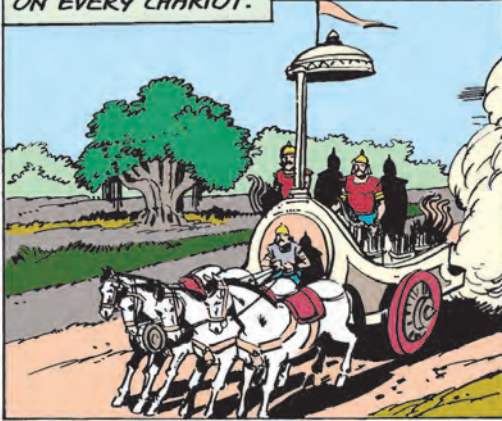


THE MATTER WAS THUS SETTLED.

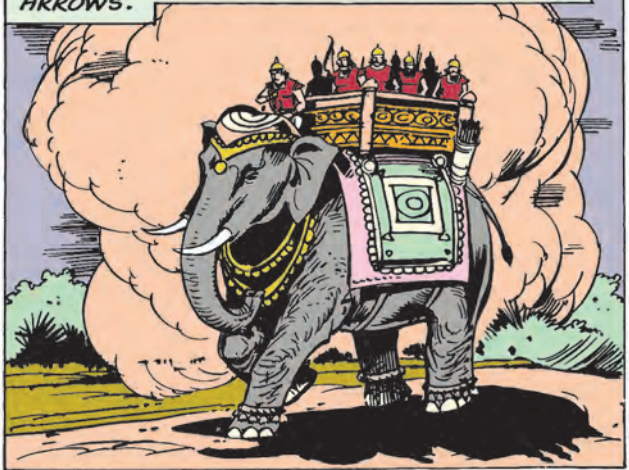
"IN THE KAURAVA CAMP, DURYODHANA DIVIDED HIS ARMY INTO ELEVEN AKSHAUHNIS AND HE PLACED KRIPA, DRONA, SHALYA, JAYADRATHA, SUDAKSHINA, KRITAVARMA, ASHWATTHAMA, KARNA, SHAKUNI AND BAHLIKA* IN CHARGE OF ONE EACH.



"EACH CHARIOT WAS PULLED BY FOUR EXCELLENT HORSES AND WAS EQUIPPED WITH A HUNDRED BOWS. THERE WERE TWO WARRIORS, TWO ATTENDANTS AND ONE CHARIOTEER ON EVERY CHARIOT.



"EACH ELEPHANT WAS DECKED WITH ORNAMENTS AND CARRIED SEVEN WARRIORS AND LOADS OF WEAPONS AND QUIVERS OF ARROWS.



"APART FROM THESE THERE WERE THOUSANDS OF CAVALRYMEN...



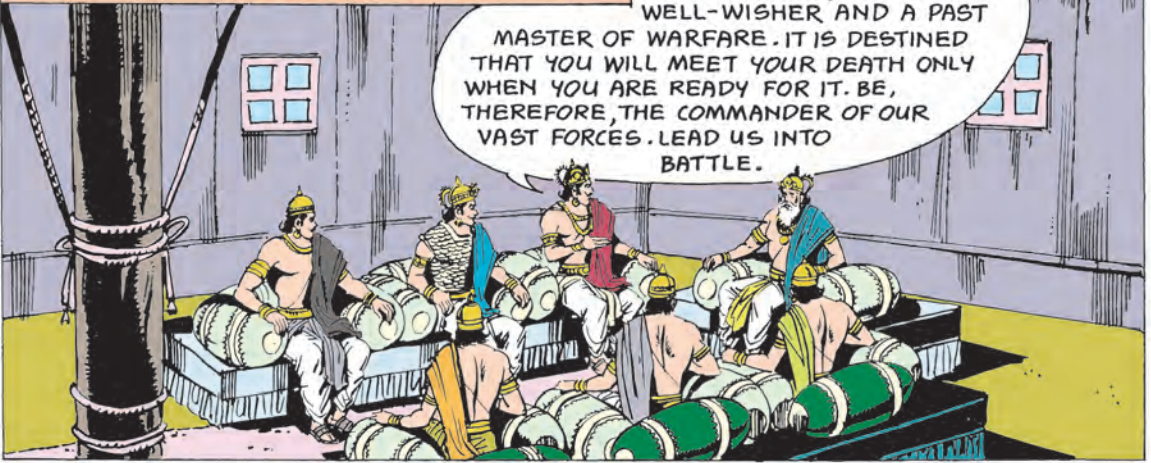
"...AND HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS INFANTRYMEN.



* KING OF BAHLIK, THE ANCIENT NAME FOR BALAKH

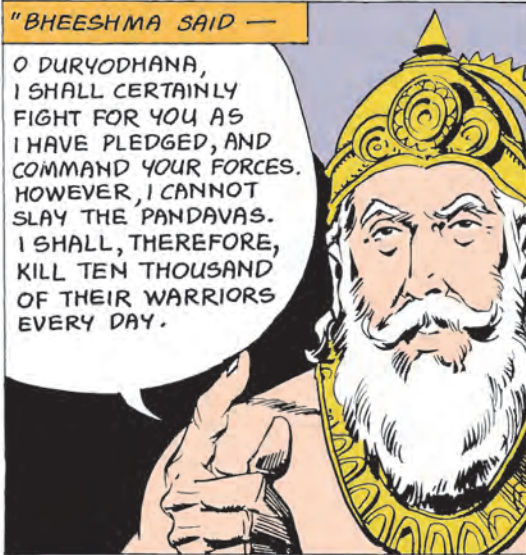
"DURYODHANA THEN ADDRESSED BHEESHMA —

O GREAT SIRE, YOU ARE MY WELL-WISHER AND A PAST MASTER OF WARFARE. IT IS DESTINED THAT YOU WILL MEET YOUR DEATH ONLY WHEN YOU ARE READY FOR IT. BE, THEREFORE, THE COMMANDER OF OUR VAST FORCES. LEAD US INTO BATTLE.

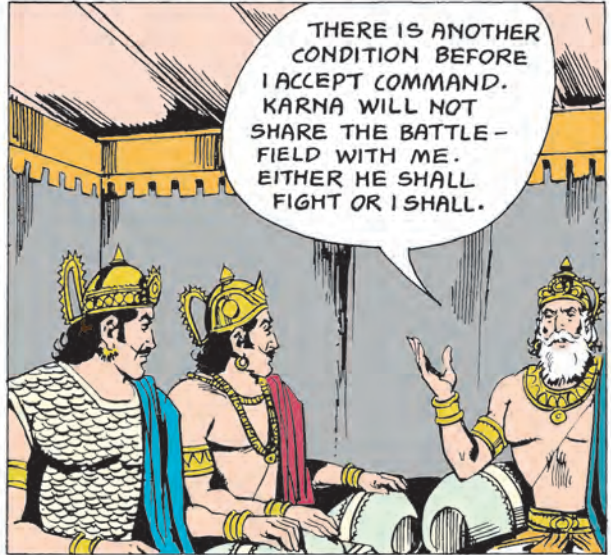


"BHEESHMA SAID —

O DURYODHANA, I SHALL CERTAINLY FIGHT FOR YOU AS I HAVE PLEDGED, AND COMMAND YOUR FORCES. HOWEVER, I CANNOT SLAY THE PANDAVAS. I SHALL, THEREFORE, KILL TEN THOUSAND OF THEIR WARRIORS EVERY DAY.



THERE IS ANOTHER CONDITION BEFORE I ACCEPT COMMAND. KARNA WILL NOT SHARE THE BATTLE-FIELD WITH ME. EITHER HE SHALL FIGHT OR I SHALL.



"HEARING THIS, KARNA SAID —

AS LONG AS BHEESHMA IS ALIVE, I SHALL NOT FIGHT. ONLY AFTER HIS DEATH SHALL I FACE ARJUNA IN BATTLE.

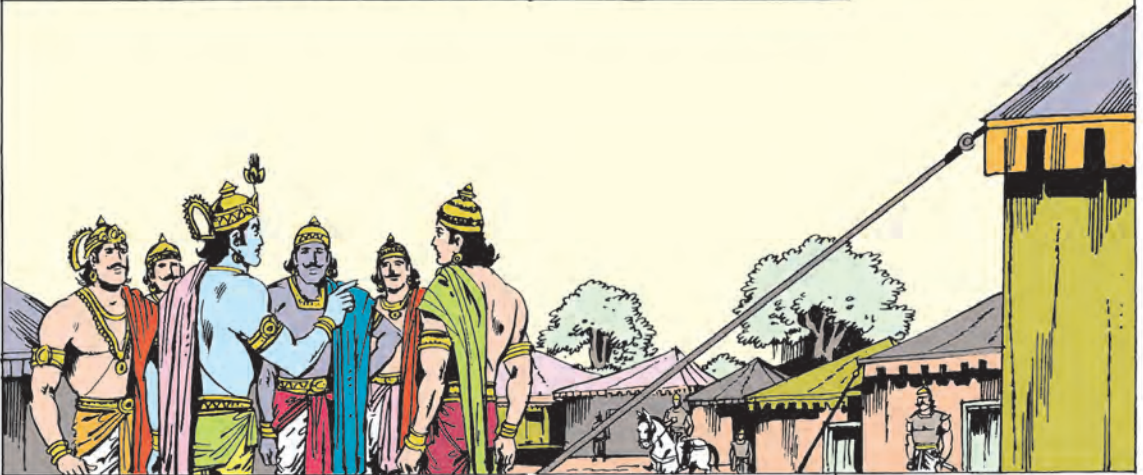


"WHEN THE NEWS OF BHEESHMA HAVING TAKEN THE COMMAND OF THE KAURAVA ARMY REACHED THE PANDAVA CAMP, YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —

ENSURE THAT THE ARMY IS ALERT AND READY FOR COMBAT. OUR FIRST ENCOUNTER WILL BE WITH OUR GRANDSIRE, BHEESHMA. LET SKILLED WARRIORS LEAD OUR FORCES INTO BATTLE.



"AND SO, THE SEVEN DIVISIONS OF THE PANDAVA ARMY WERE ARRAYED FOR BATTLE UNDER THE COMMAND OF DHRISTADYUMNA. THE OVERALL COMMAND WAS BESTOWED ON ARJUNA, WHO HAD KRISHNA AS HIS GUIDE AND CHARIOTEER.



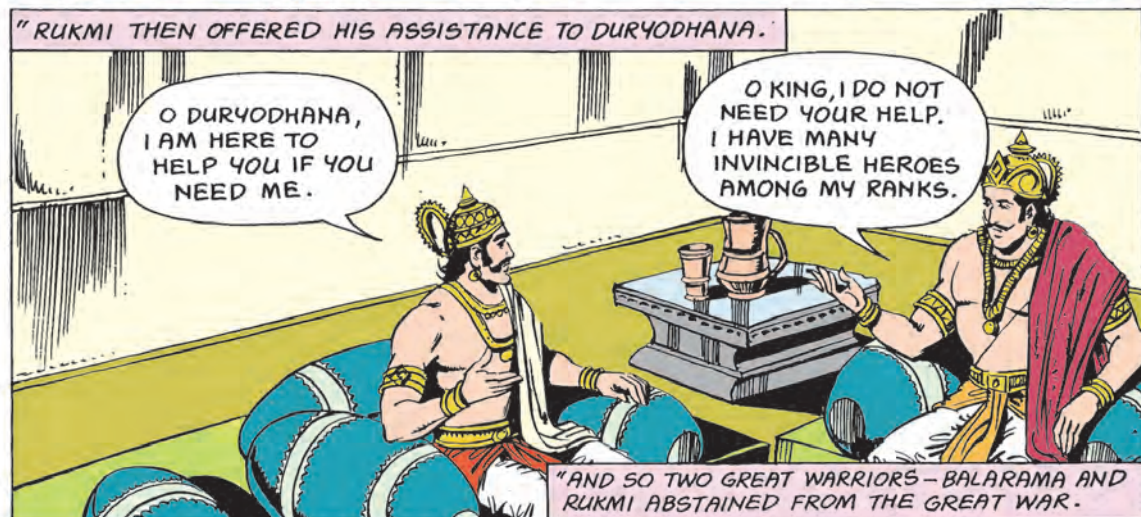
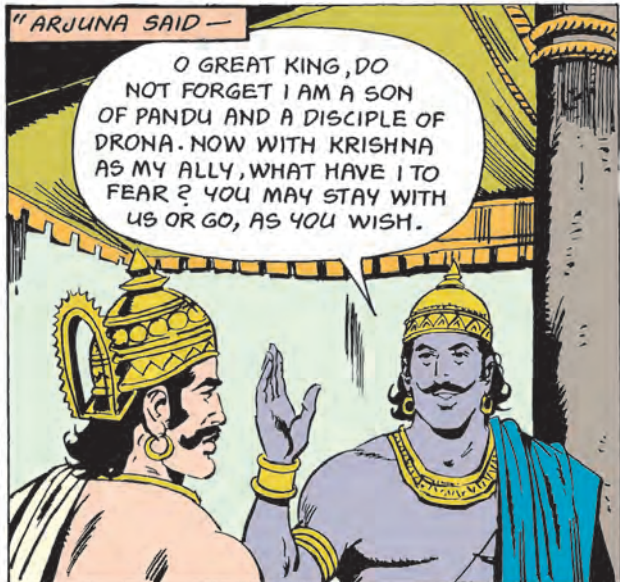
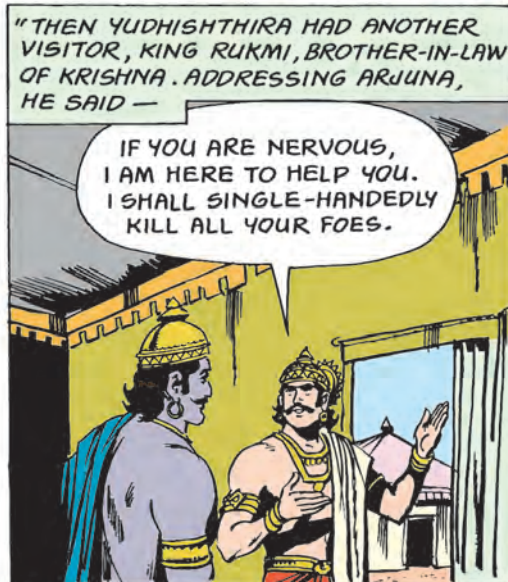
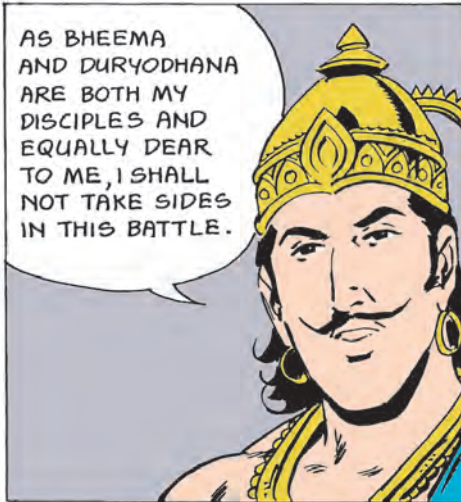
"AS THEY SAT DISCUSSING THE STRATEGY OF WAR, KRISHNA'S BROTHER, PALARAMA, ARRIVED THERE.



"HE SAID —

THIS FIERCE AND TERRIBLE SLAUGHTER APPEARS INEVITABLE. I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU ALL EMERGE SAFE AND SOUND FROM THIS STRIFE.

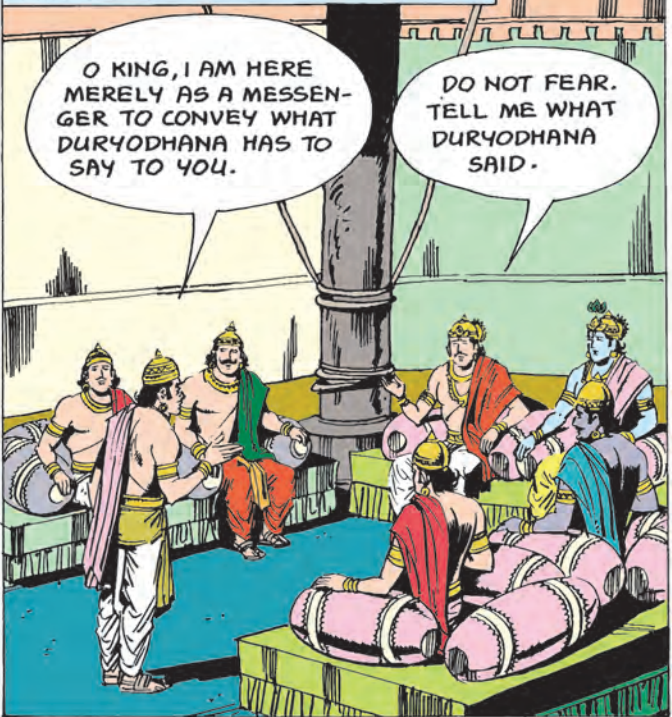




THEN, O KING, DURYODHANA SENT A MESSAGE TO THE PANDAVA CAMP THROUGH ULOOKA, SON OF SHAKUNI.



"ULOOKA ARRIVED AT THE PANDAVA CAMP AND MET YUDHISHTHIRA.

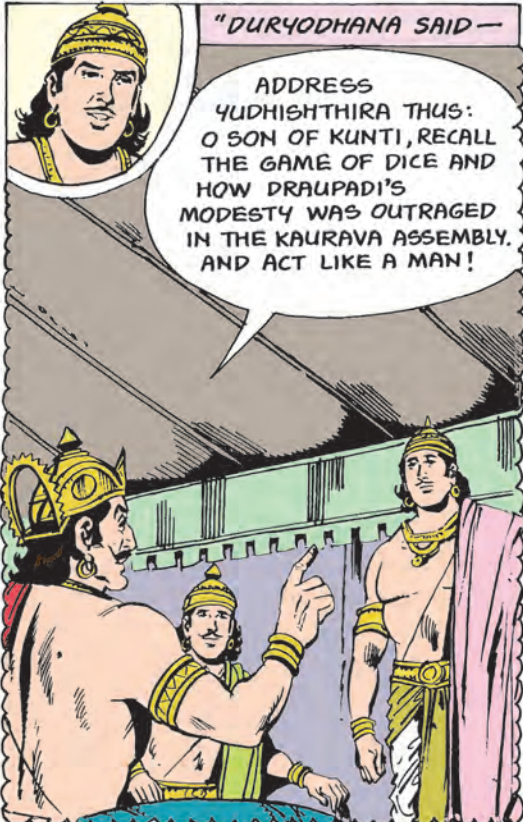


O KING, I AM HERE MERELY AS A MESSENGER TO CONVEY WHAT DURYODHANA HAS TO SAY TO YOU.

DO NOT FEAR. TELL ME WHAT DURYODHANA SAID.

"DURYODHANA SAID —

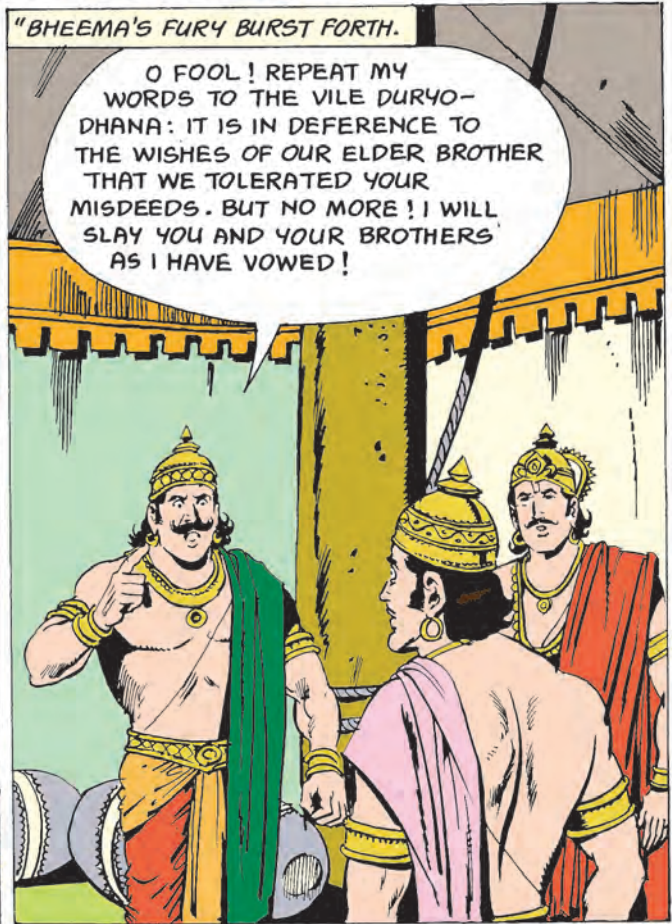
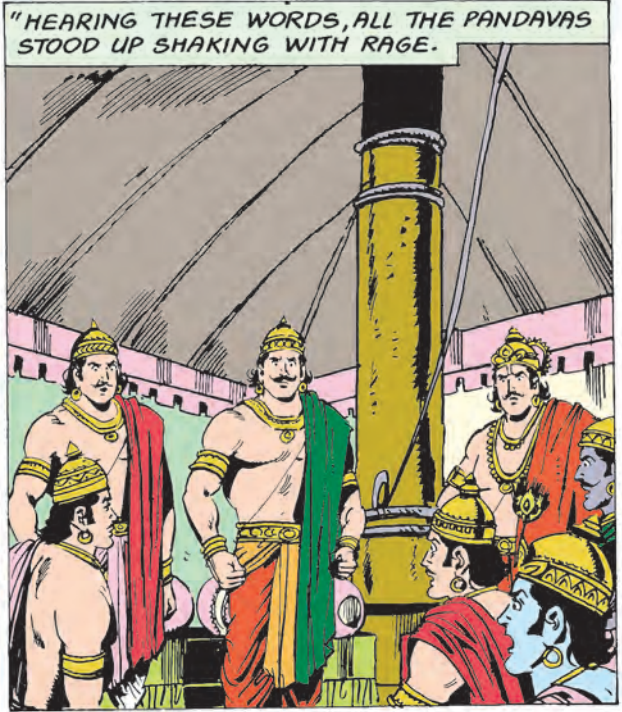
ADDRESS YUDHISHTHIRA THUS: O SON OF KUNTI, RECALL THE GAME OF DICE AND HOW DRAUPADI'S MODESTY WAS OUTRAGED IN THE KAURAVA ASSEMBLY. AND ACT LIKE A MAN!



"HE CONTINUED —

SAY TO BHEEMA: O BHEEMA REMEMBER YOUR VOW TO DRINK DUHSHASANA'S BLOOD! THE TIME HAS COME TO FULFIL IT. THE FIELD OF KURUKSHETRA IS READY FOR WAR. COME, LET US CLASH!





"SAHADEVA SAID —

TELL SHAKUNI,
YOUR WICKED FATHER,
THAT HE HAS CAUSED
OUR ANIMOSITY WITH THE
KAURAVAS. LET THE BATTLE
START, I WILL SLAY YOU
FIRST AND THEN YOUR
FATHER.



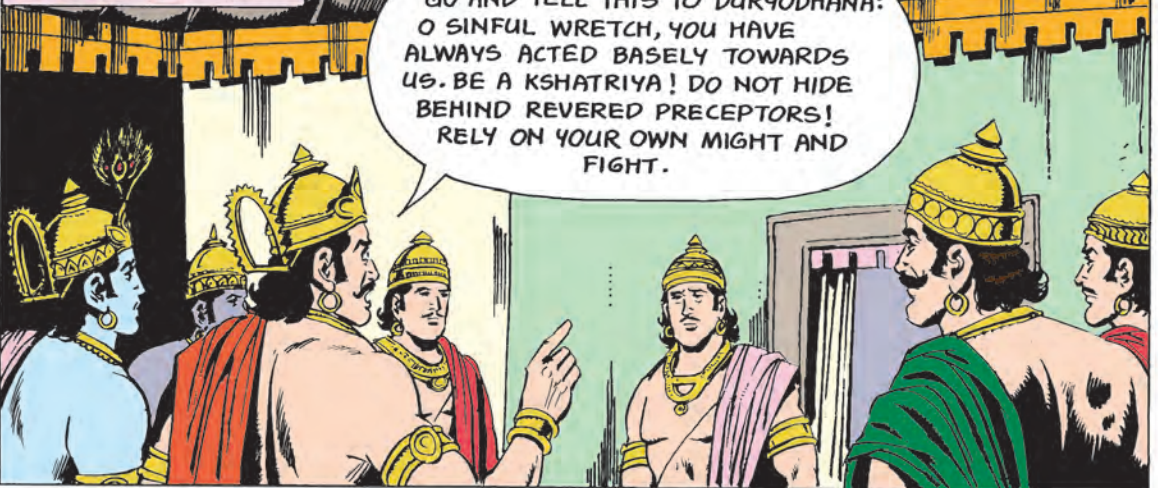
"ARJUNA SAID —

OH ULOOKA!
WORDS ARE WASTED
NOW. I WILL CONVEY
THE REST OF MY
REPLY THROUGH MY
GANDEEVA ON THE
MORROW.



"YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —

GO AND TELL THIS TO DURYODHANA:
O SINFUL WRETCH, YOU HAVE
ALWAYS ACTED BASELY TOWARDS
US. BE A KSHATRIYA! DO NOT HIDE
BEHIND REVERED PRECEPTORS!
RELY ON YOUR OWN MIGHT AND
FIGHT.



"KRISHNA SAID —

TAKE MY ANSWER TO
DURYODHANA: O FOOL, DON'T
THINK I'LL BE A MERE
CHARIOTEER TO ARJUNA.
IF PROVOKED, I CAN ANNIHILATE
THE ENTIRE KAURAVA ARMY.



"SHIKHANDI SAID—

TELL
DURYODHANA:
I SHALL SLAY
HIS GRANDSIRE,
BHEESHMA ! FOR
I HAVE BEEN
CREATED SPECI-
FICALLY FOR THAT
TASK...



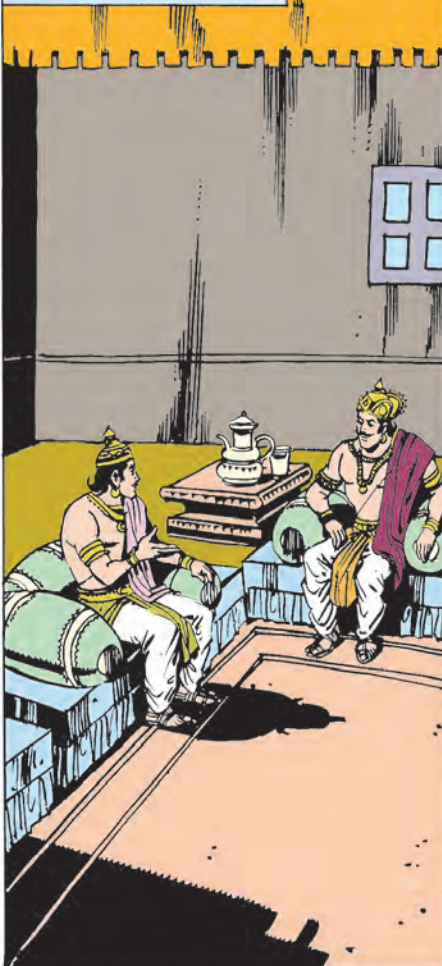
"DHRISTADYUMNA SAID—

...AND
I SHALL SLAY
DRONA !



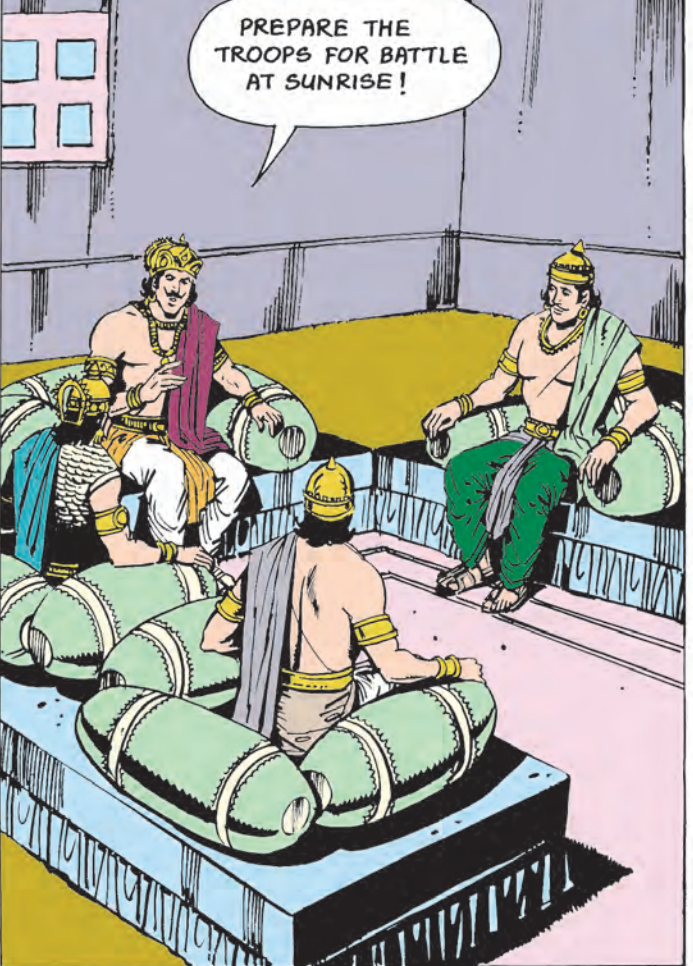
"THEN ULOOKA LEFT THE PANDAVAS...

"...AND, RETURNING TO DURYODHANA, HE REPEATED THE PANDAVAS' REPLIES.



"DURYODHANA CALLED DUHSHASANA, KARNA AND SHAKUNI.

PREPARE THE
TROOPS FOR BATTLE
AT SUNRISE !



"THEN DURYODHANA CALLED BHEESHMA AND SAID —

O GRANDSIRE !
WITH YOUR LEADERSHIP
AND DRONA'S SUPPORT, OUR
VICTORY IS ENSURED. WOULD
YOU CLASSIFY THE RATHIS,
ATIRATHIS AND MAHARATHIS*
IN THE TWO ARMIES ?

"BHEESHMA SAID —

O DURYODHANA,
YOU AND YOUR
BROTHERS, SKILLED
AND ACCOMPLISHED
WARRIORS, ARE
RATHIS, FOR
CERTAIN.

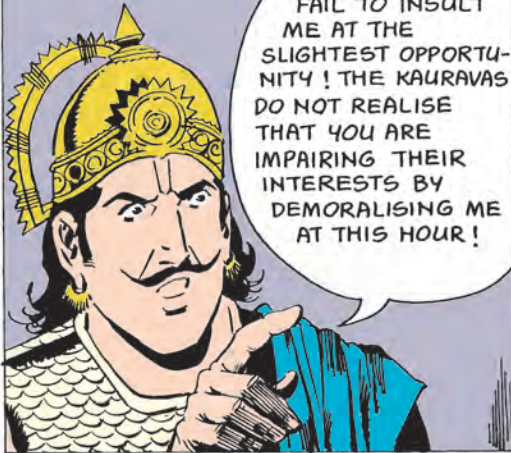
"THE MIGHTY DRONA, ENDUED WITH GREAT
PROWESS, IS A MAHARATHI.

"DRONA'S SON, ASHWATTHAMA,
A MASTER AT WARFARE, IS A
MAHARATHI.

THIS VILE BRAGGART,
KARNA, IS NEITHER A RATHI
NOR AN ATIRATHI. IN MY
JUDGEMENT HE IS ONLY HALF
A RATHI !

* WARRIORS ON CHARIOT WERE CLASSIFIED AS RATHI, ATIRATHI OR MAHARATHI, DEPENDING ON THEIR SKILL AND VALOUR

"TOUCHED TO THE QUICK, KARNA REPLIED —



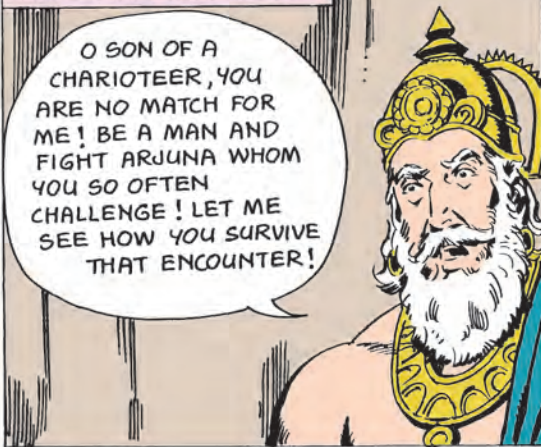
O GRANDSIRE,
YOU NEVER
FAIL TO INSULT
ME AT THE
SLIGHTEST OPPORTU-
NITY! THE KAURAVAS
DO NOT REALISE
THAT YOU ARE
IMPAIRING THEIR
INTERESTS BY
DEMORALISING ME
AT THIS HOUR!

"HE TURNED TO DURYODHANA —



O DURYODHANA!
BHEESHMA WILL ONLY
MISGUIDE YOU! ABANDON
HIM! I CAN DEFEAT THE
ENTIRE PANDAVA ARMY
SINGLE-HANDED! BUT I WILL
NOT FIGHT AS LONG AS
BHEESHMA LIVES!

"BHEESHMA RETORTED —



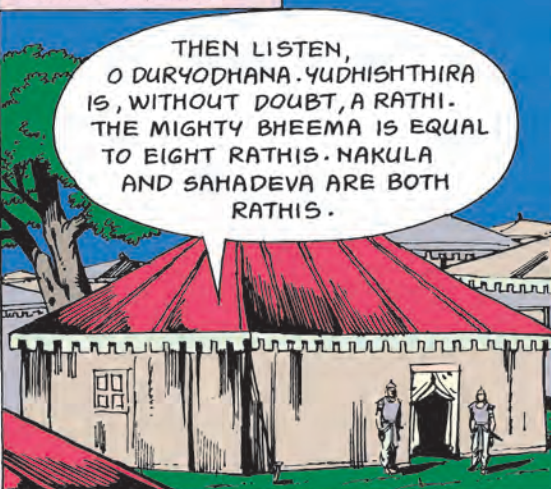
O SON OF A
CHARIOTEER, YOU
ARE NO MATCH FOR
ME! BE A MAN AND
FIGHT ARJUNA WHOM
YOU SO OFTEN
CHALLENGE! LET ME
SEE HOW YOU SURVIVE
THAT ENCOUNTER!

"DURYODHANA INTERVENED —



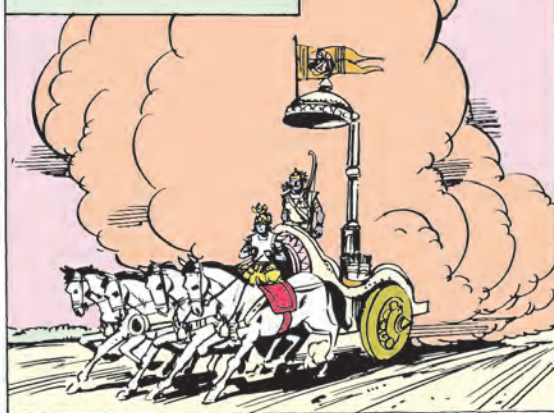
O GRANDSIRE! NOW
TELL ME ABOUT THE
MIGHT OF THE
PANDAVAS!

"BHEESHMA SAID —



THEN LISTEN,
O DURYODHANA. YUDHISHTHIRA
IS, WITHOUT DOUBT, A RATHI.
THE MIGHTY BHEEMA IS EQUAL
TO EIGHT RATHIS. NAKULA
AND SAHADEVA ARE BOTH
RATHIS.

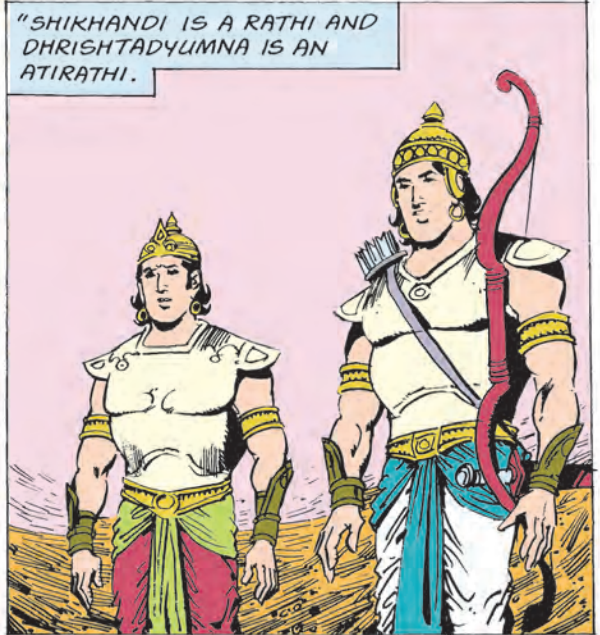
"WITH KRISHNA AS HIS CHARIOTEER
AND WITH HIS CELESTIAL WEAPONS,
THERE IS NO ONE TO MATCH THE
VALOUR OF ARJUNA.



"VIRATA AND DRUPADA ARE BOTH MAHARATHIS."



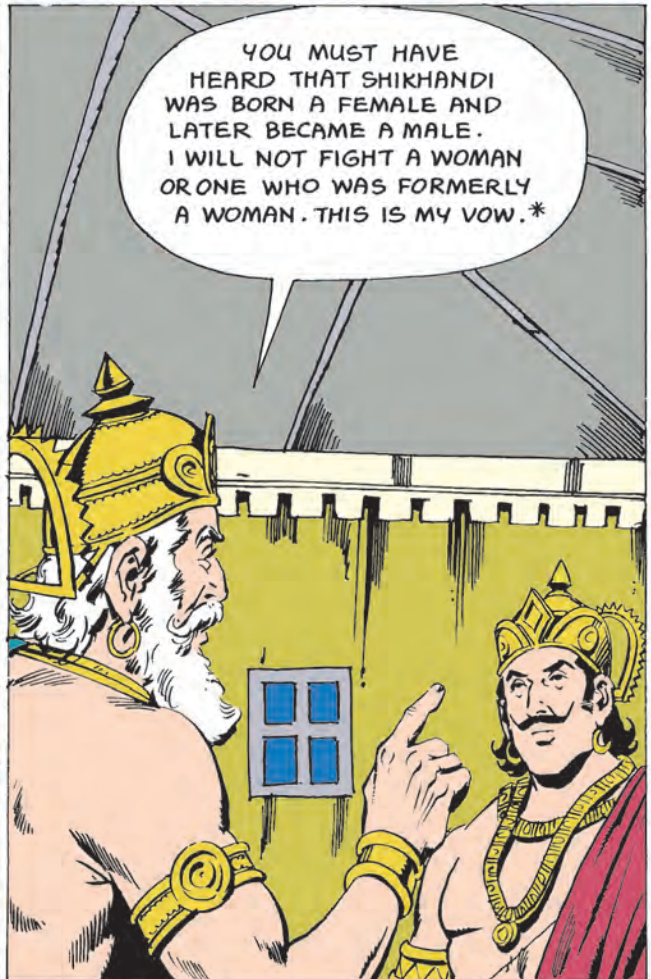
"SHIKHANDI IS A RATHI AND DHRISHTADYUMNA IS AN ATIRATHI."



I HAVE NOW TOLD YOU WHO ARE THE RATHIS, ATIRATHIS AND MAHARATHIS IN BOTH THE ARMIES. I WILL FIGHT ARJUNA AND KRISHNA AND OTHER MIGHTY HEROES. BUT I WILL NOT KILL SHIKHANDI EVEN IF HE OPPOSES ME.



YOU MUST HAVE HEARD THAT SHIKHANDI WAS BORN A FEMALE AND LATER BECAME A MALE. I WILL NOT FIGHT A WOMAN OR ONE WHO WAS FORMERLY A WOMAN. THIS IS MY VOW.*



"THE NEXT MORNING, AS THE KAURAVA TROOPS ARRAYED FOR BATTLE, DURYODHANA SAID —

O BHEESHMA, PLEASE
TELL ME IN HOW MANY
DAYS YOU CAN DESTROY
THE ENTIRE PANDAVA
ARMY.

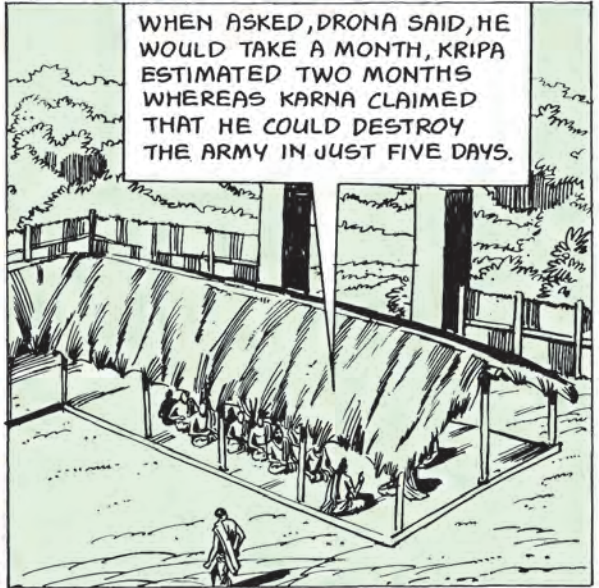


"BHEESHMA SAID —

SLAYING TEN
THOUSAND FOOT SOLDIERS
AND ONE THOUSAND
CHARIOT WARRIORS DAILY,
I SHALL DESTROY THE
ENTIRE PANDAVA ARMY IN
A MONTH'S TIME.

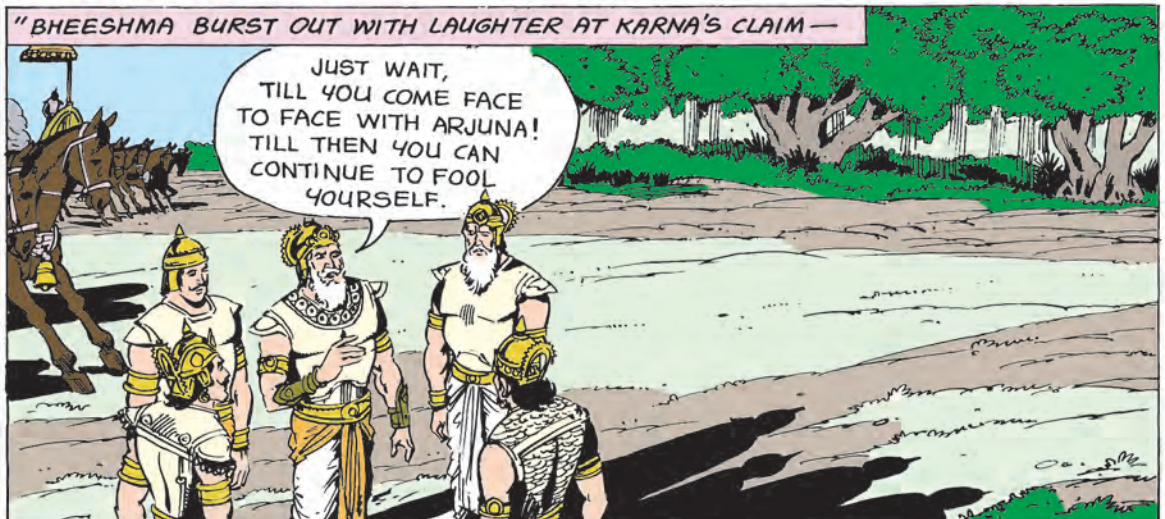


WHEN ASKED, DRONA SAID, HE
WOULD TAKE A MONTH, KRIPA
ESTIMATED TWO MONTHS
WHEREAS KARNA CLAIMED
THAT HE COULD DESTROY
THE ARMY IN JUST FIVE DAYS.



"BHEESHMA BURST OUT WITH LAUGHTER AT KARNA'S CLAIM —

JUST WAIT,
TILL YOU COME FACE
TO FACE WITH ARJUNA!
TILL THEN YOU CAN
CONTINUE TO FOOL
YOURSELF.

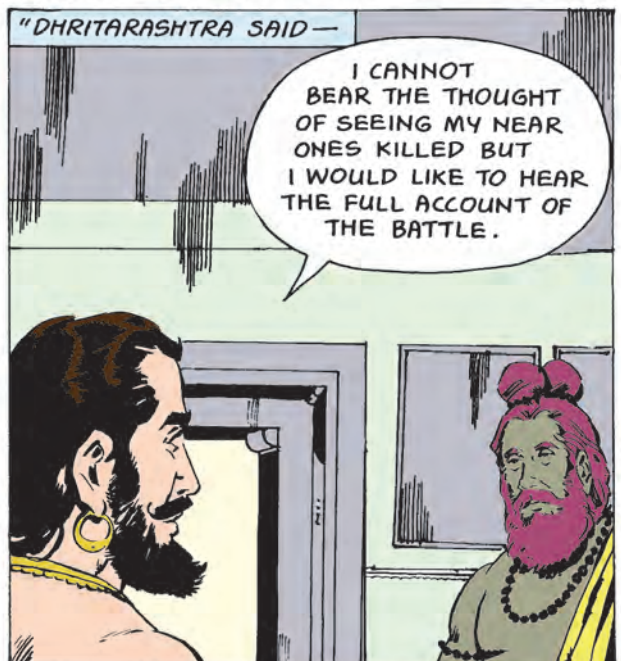
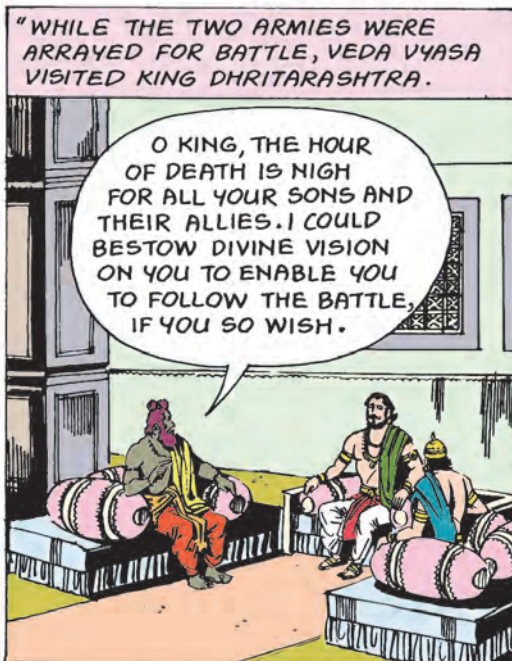
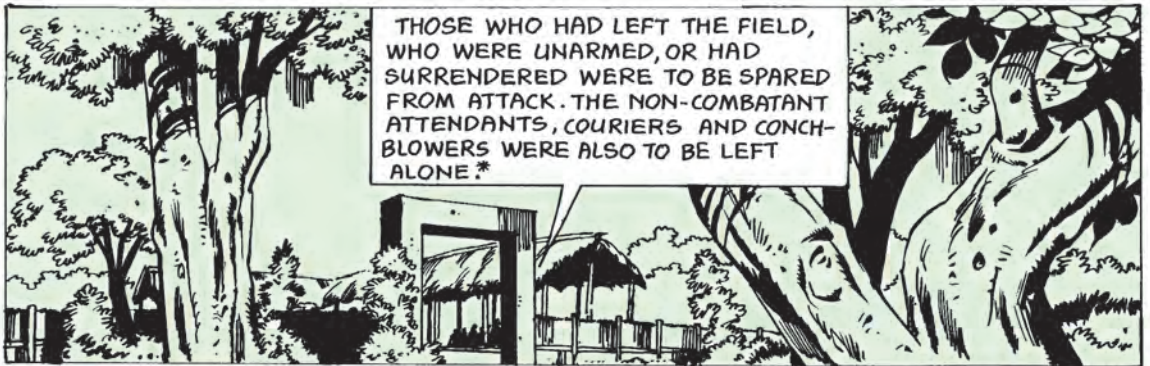
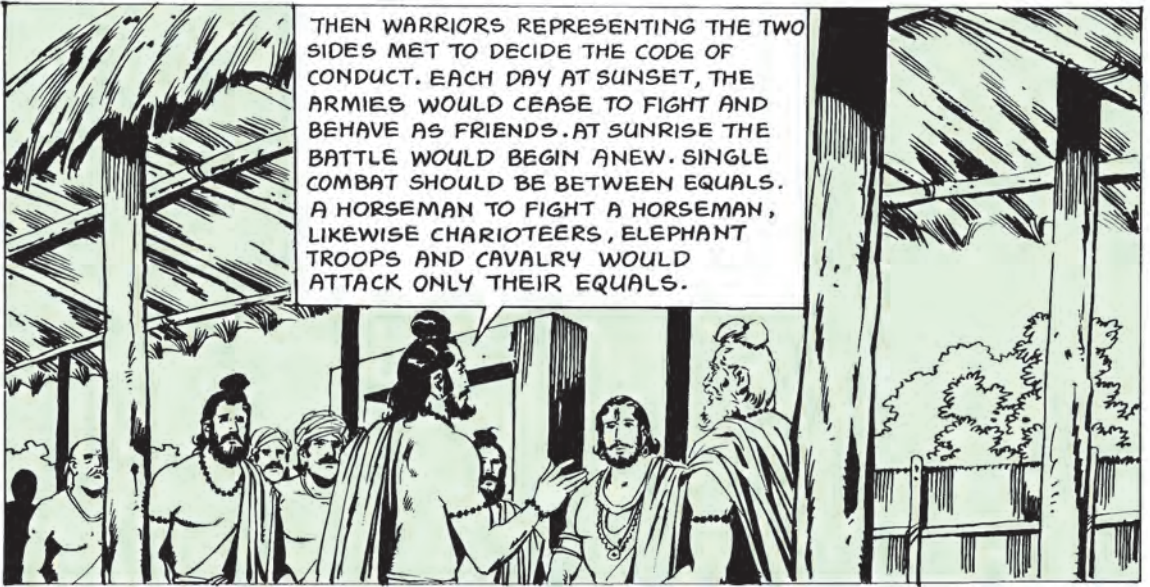


"THE NEXT MORNING, LED BY BHEESHMA AND DRONA, DURYODHANA, ASHWATTHAMA AND JAYADRATHA AND OTHER MIGHTY WARRIORS, THE KAURAVA ARMY MARCHED OUT IN ALL ITS STRENGTH.

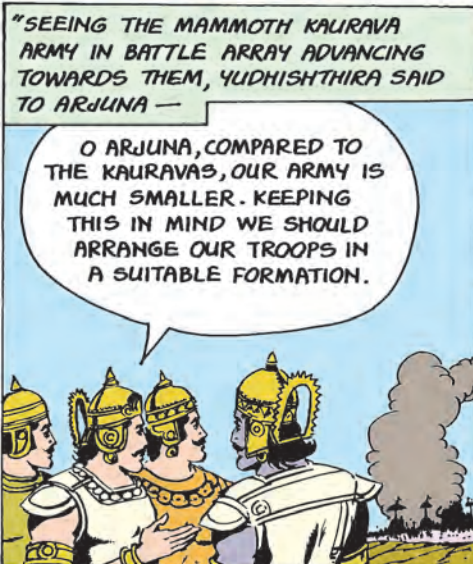
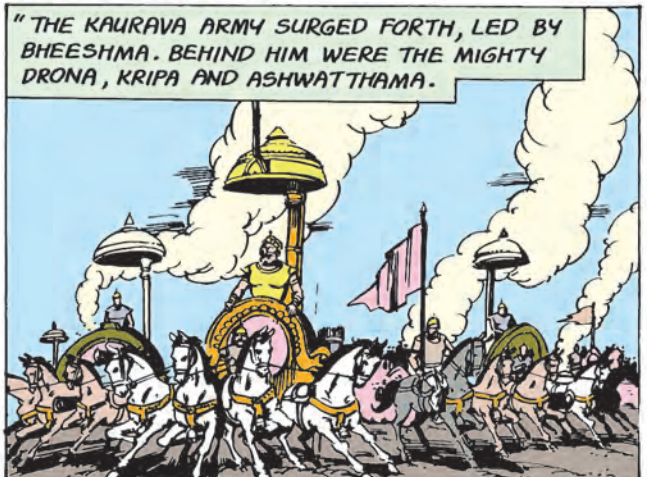
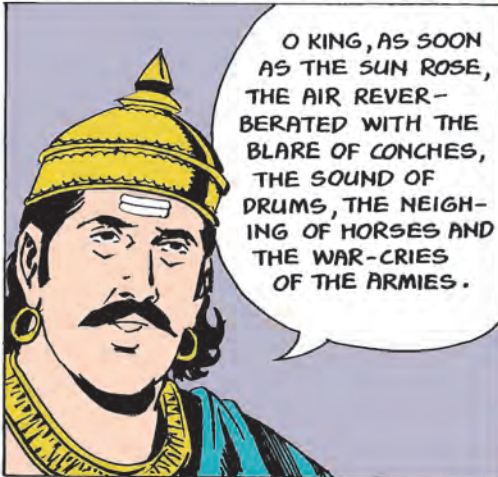
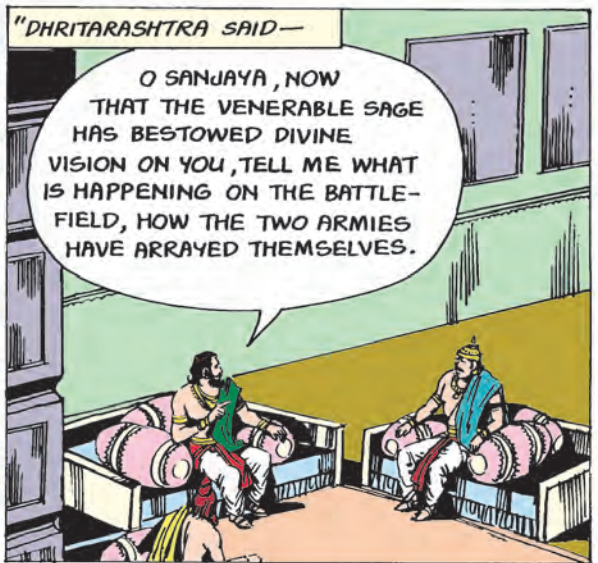


"LIKEWISE, THE PANDAVA ARMY ALSO MARCHED OUT, HEADED BY DHRISTADYUMNA. AND THE OTHER HEROES LEADING THE TROOPS INCLUDED ARJUNA AND BHEEMA, VIRATA AND DRUPADA, AND SHIKHANDI.



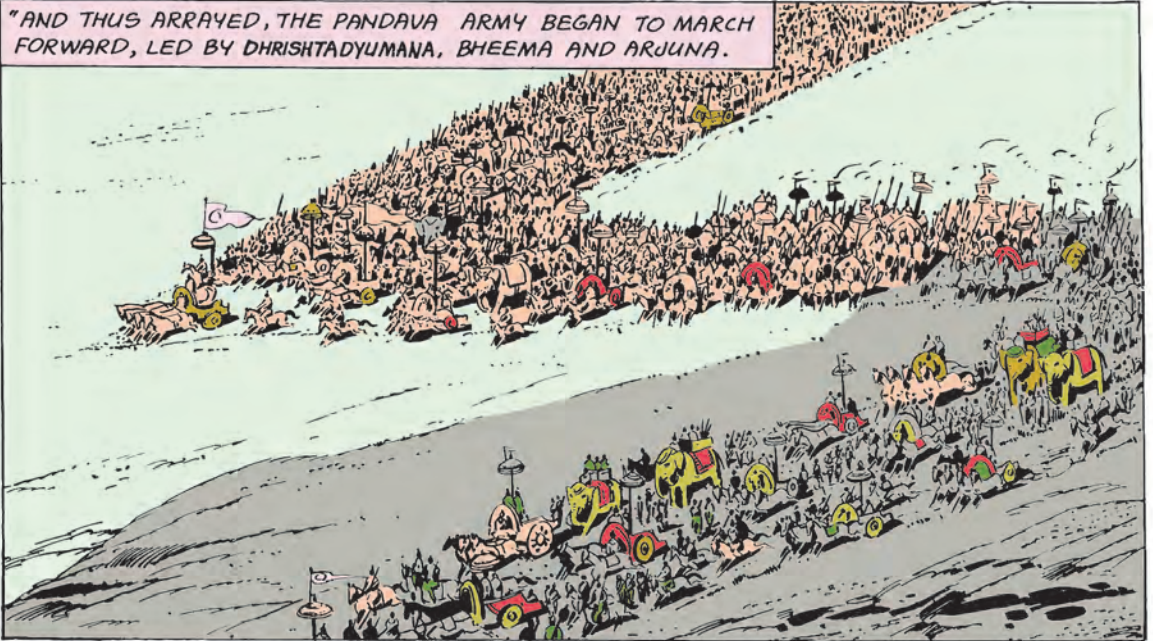


* THIS CODE OF WARFARE IS REFRESHINGLY DIFFERENT FROM PRESENT-DAY PRACTICES WHICH SPARE NO ONE



* THUNDERBOLT, INDRA'S WEAPON

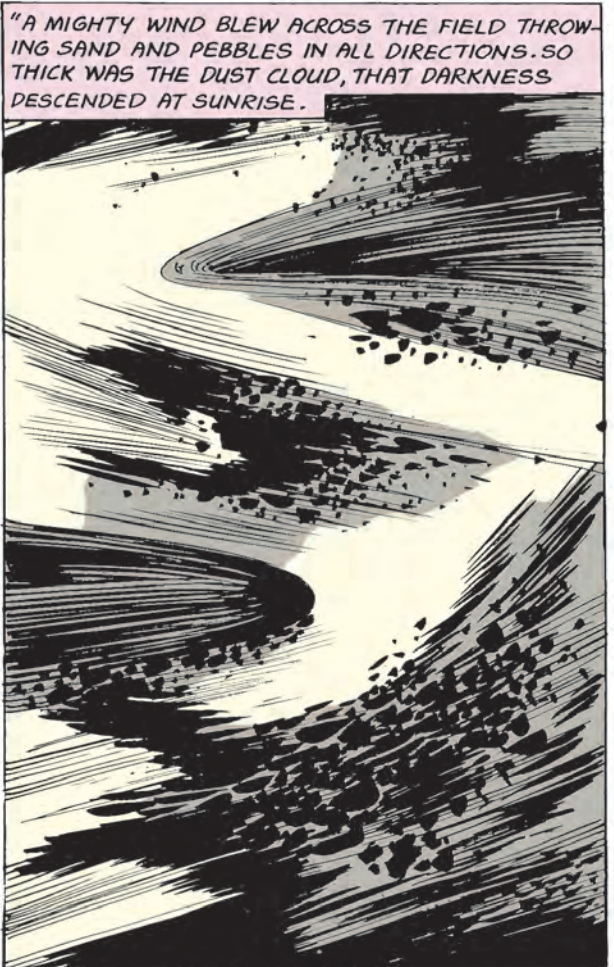
"AND THUS ARRAYED, THE PANDAVA ARMY BEGAN TO MARCH FORWARD, LED BY DHRISTADYUMANA, BHEEMA AND ARJUNA.



"AND ON THE BATTLEFIELD OF KURUKSHETRA, RAIN FELL FROM A CLOUDLESS SKY AND THE ROLL OF THUNDER WAS HEARD.



"A MIGHTY WIND BLEW ACROSS THE FIELD THROWING SAND AND PEBBLES IN ALL DIRECTIONS. SO THICK WAS THE DUST CLOUD, THAT DARKNESS DESCENDED AT SUNRISE.



"WHEN YUDHISHTHIRA SAW THE VAST KAURAVA ARMY, HIS HEART SANK. HE ADDRESSED ARJUNA —

O ARJUNA, BHEESHMA HAS ARRAYED THE VAST KAURAVA ARMY IN AN INVINCIBLE FORMATION. HOW CAN WE HOPE TO FIGHT THEM ?



"ARJUNA SAID —

O KING, IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A SMALL ARMY TO DEFEAT A VAST FORCE. FOR VICTORY DOES NOT DEPEND ON MIGHT AND NUMBERS, BUT ON RIGHTEOUSNESS. * WHERE THERE IS KRISHNA, THERE IS VICTORY.



"MEANWHILE, DURYODHANA, ON SEEING THE PANDAVA ARMY ARRAYED FOR WAR, APPROACHED DRONA AND SAID —

SIRE, JUST LOOK AT THE BATTLE FORMATION OF THE PANDAVAS! BHEESHMA WILL BE THEIR IMMEDIATE TARGET. ORDER THE MIGHTIEST OF WARRIORS TO SURROUND AND PROTECT BHEESHMA.



"THEN BHEESHMA BLEW ON HIS CONCH, SIGNALLING THE START OF THE WAR.



"AT THE PALACE DHRTIRASHTRA ASKED SANJAYA —

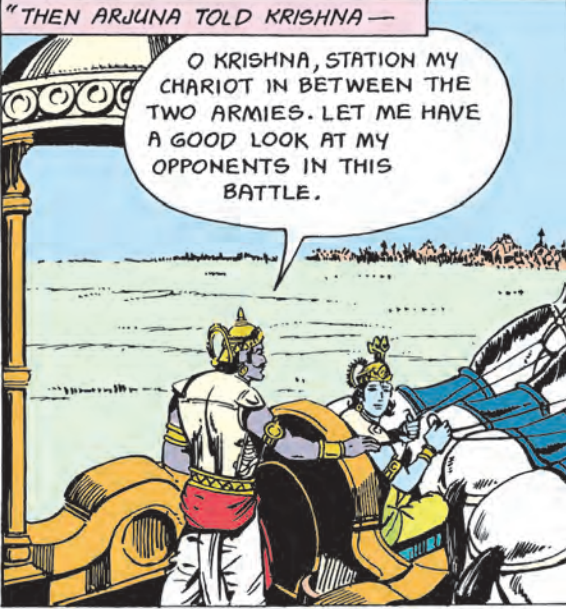
O SANJAYA, WHAT DID MY SONS AND THOSE OF PANDU DO AT THE FIELD OF KURUKSHETRA ?

O KING ! KRISHNA BLEW ON THE PANCHAJANYA AND ARJUNA ON THE DEVADATTA CONCHES SIGNALLING THEIR READINESS FOR WAR.



"THEN ARJUNA TOLD KRISHNA —

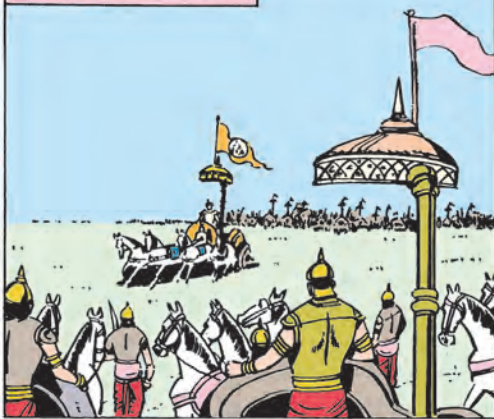
O KRISHNA, STATION MY CHARIOT IN BETWEEN THE TWO ARMIES. LET ME HAVE A GOOD LOOK AT MY OPPONENTS IN THIS BATTLE.



KRISHNA THEN DROVE THE CHARIOT.



"...AND POSITIONED IT IN BETWEEN THE TWO ARMIES.



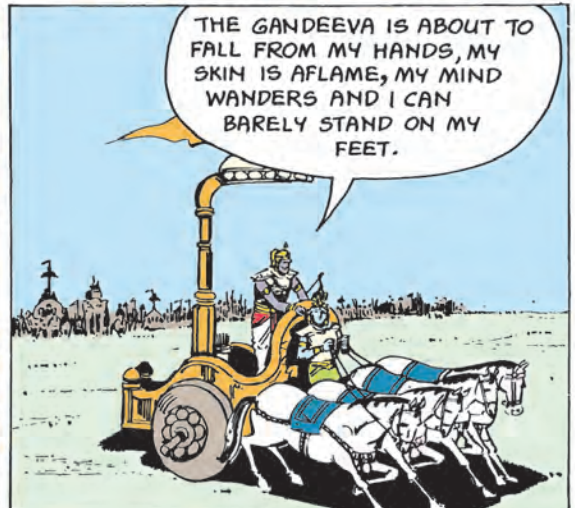
"WHEN ARJUNA SAW HIS CLOSE RELATIVES, TEACHERS AND FRIENDS IN THE TWO ARMIES A SUDDEN CHANGE CAME OVER HIS MIND. GONE WAS HIS SELF-ASSURANCE.

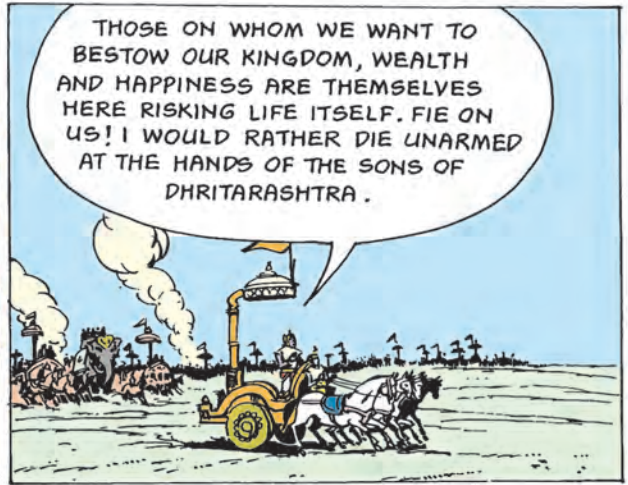
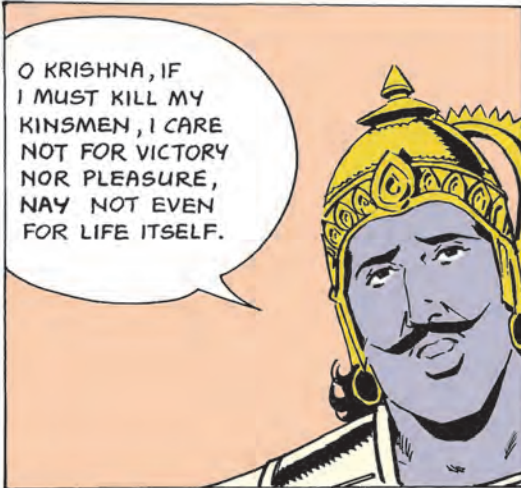


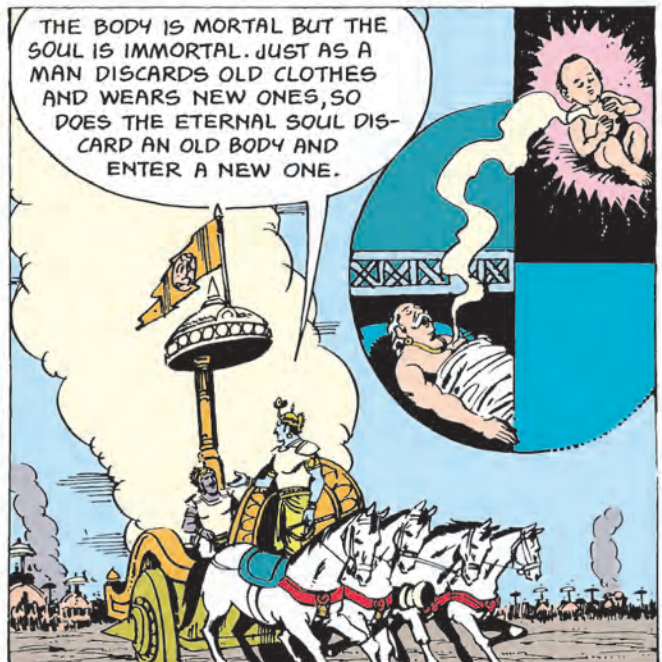
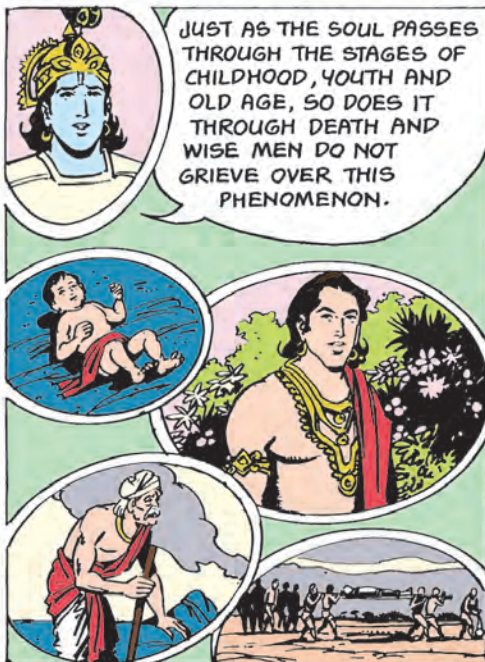
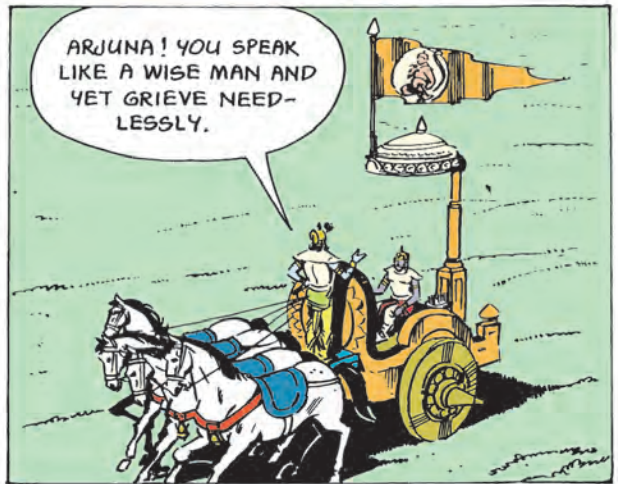
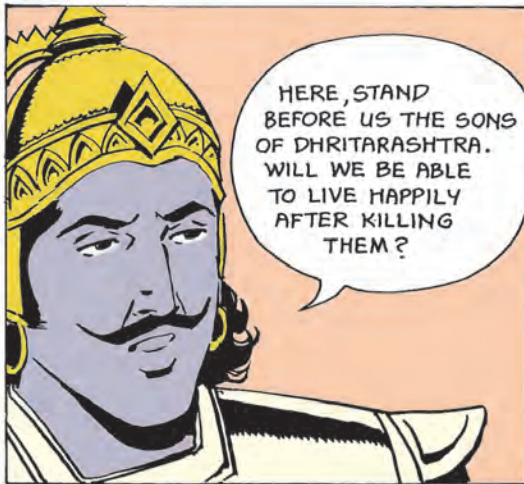
O KRISHNA, THE SIGHT OF THE SEA OF FAMILIAR FACES ALL SET FOR WAR MAKES ME WEAK-KNEED, MY MOUTH DRY AND MY BODY TREMBLE.

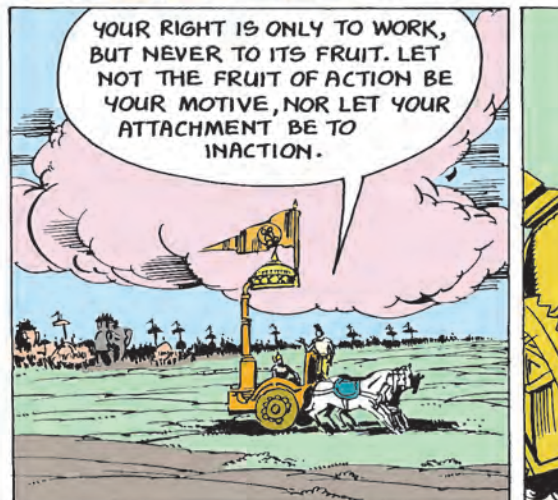
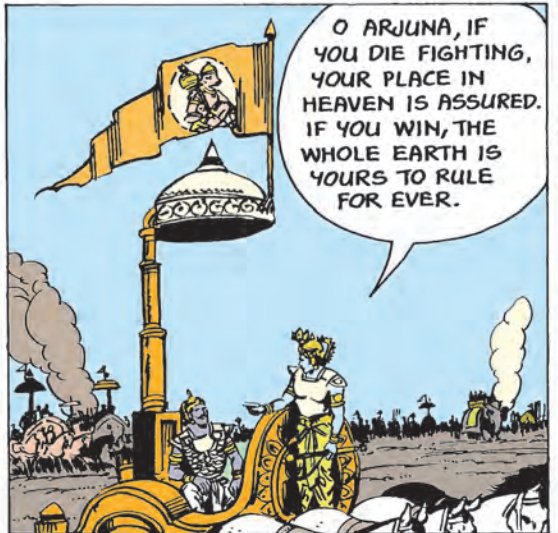


THE GANDEEVA IS ABOUT TO FALL FROM MY HANDS, MY SKIN IS AFLAME, MY MIND WANDERS AND I CAN BARELY STAND ON MY FEET.

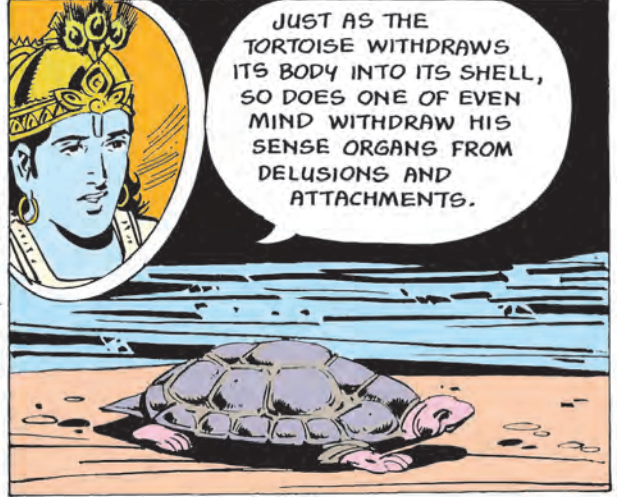
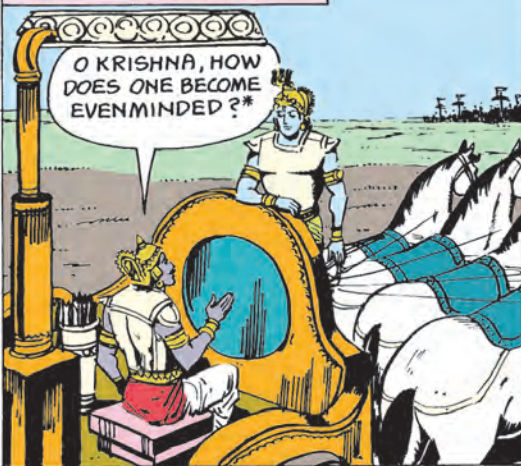




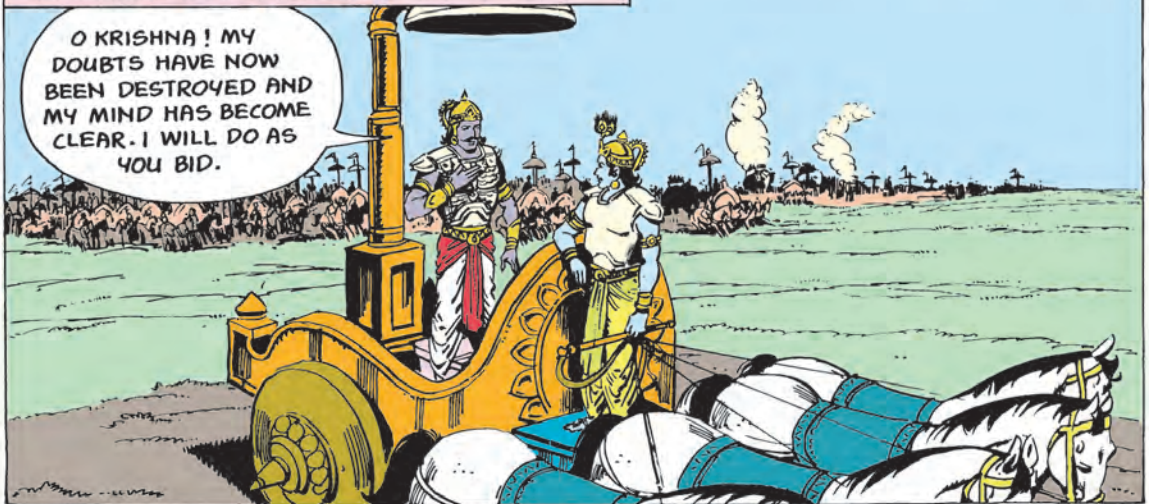




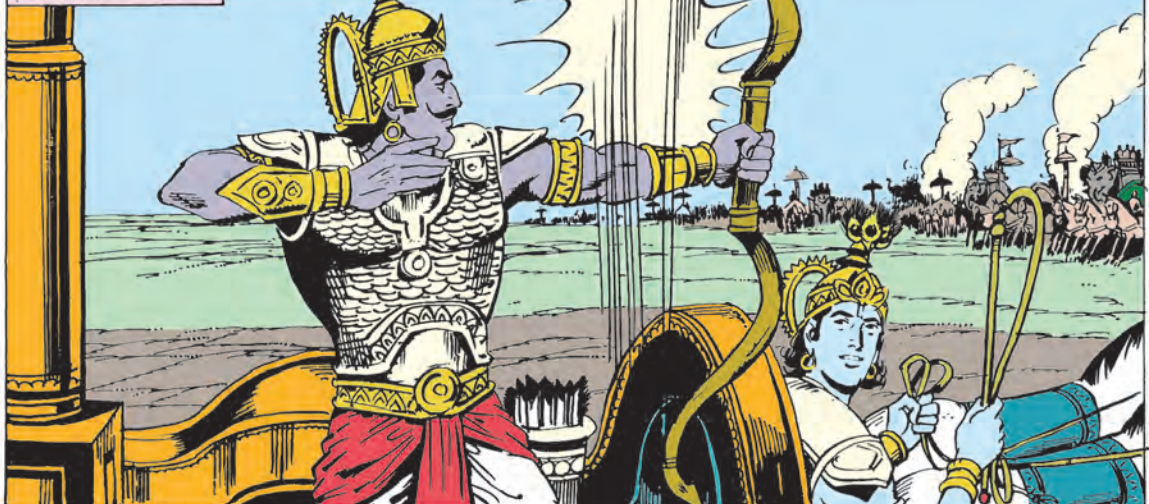
"ARJUNA THEN ASKED —



"ON HEARING THIS EXPLANATION ARJUNA SAID —



"AS ARJUNA PICKED UP HIS GANDEEVA AND TWANGED IT...

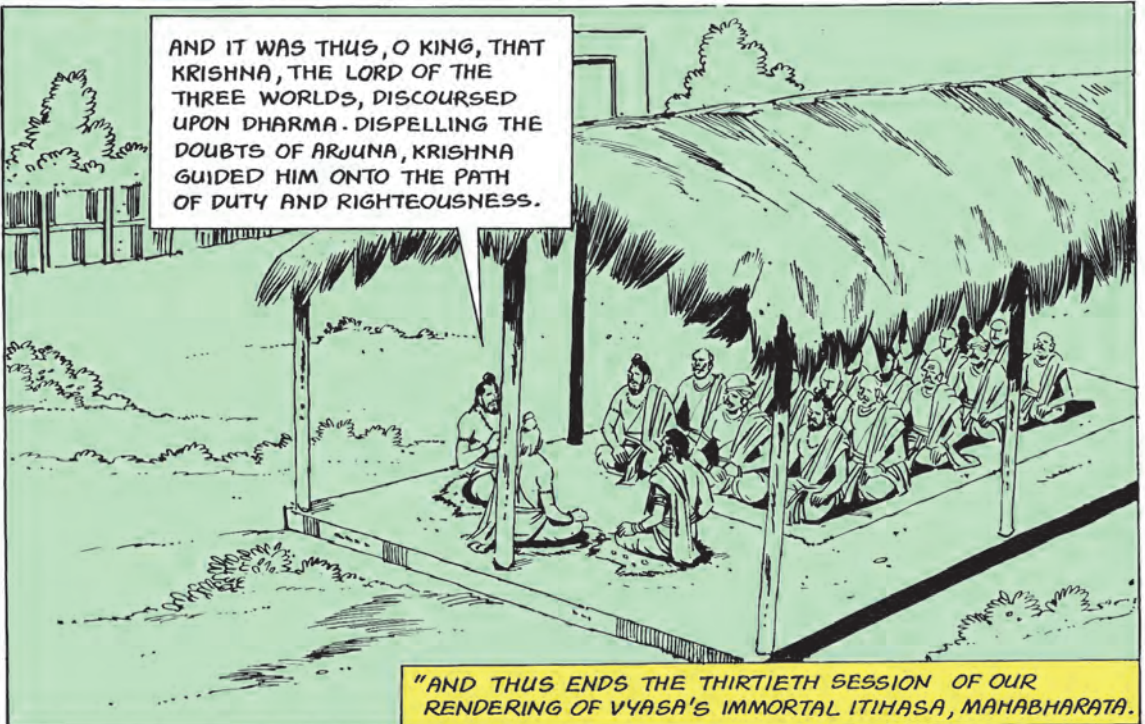


* SEE THE GITA, AMAR CHITRA KATHA TITLE NO- 505

"...A CHEER BURST FORTH AMONG THE PANDAVA RANKS.

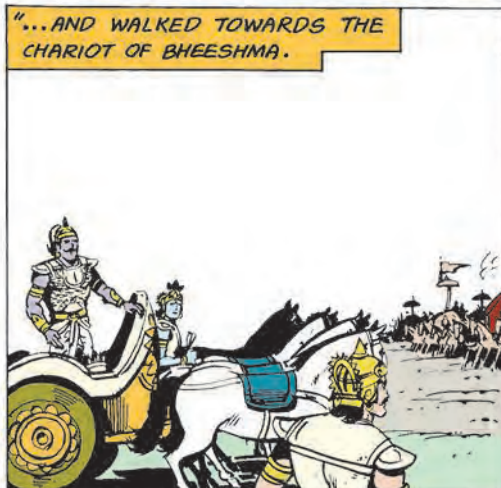
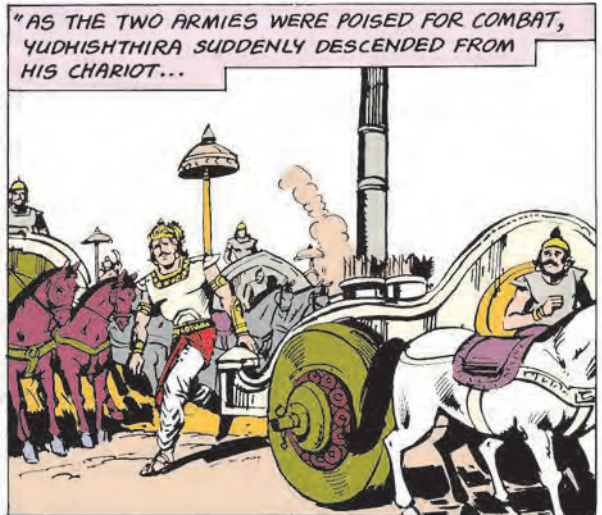
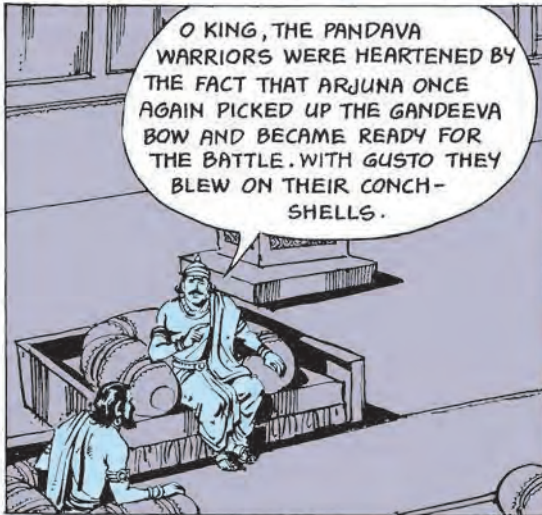
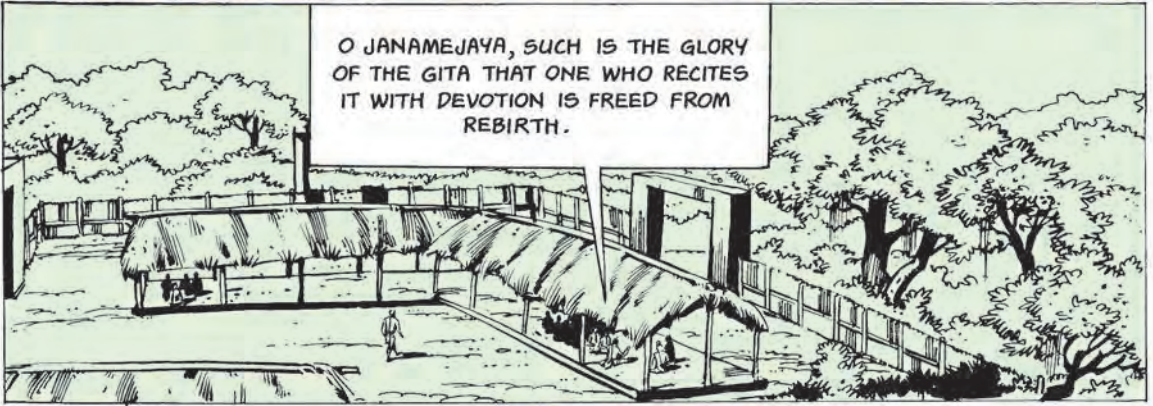


AND IT WAS THUS, O KING, THAT KRISHNA, THE LORD OF THE THREE WORLDS, DISCOURSED UPON DHARMA. DISPELLING THE DOUBTS OF ARJUNA, KRISHNA GUIDED HIM ONTO THE PATH OF DUTY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS.



Mahabharata - 31

BHEESHMA IN COMMAND



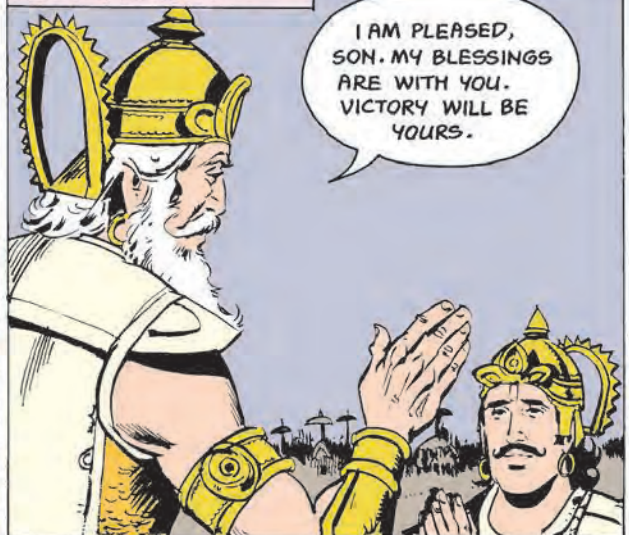
"BUT YUDHISHTHIRA DID NOT REPLY. THE KAURAVAS FELT HAPPY."



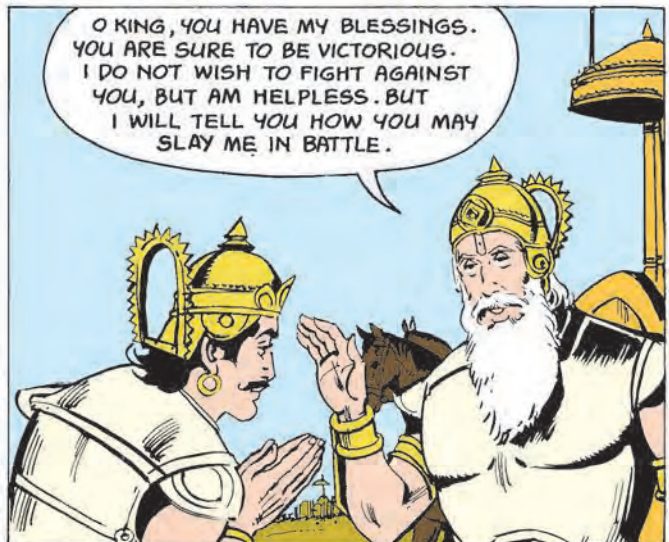
"YUDHISHTHIRA TOUCHED THE FEET OF BHEESHMA AND SAID —

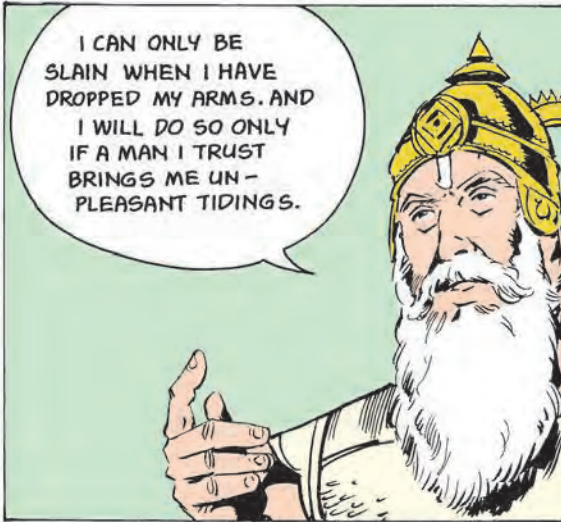


"BHEESHMA REPLIED —



"YUDHISHTHIRA THEN APPROACHED DRONA, HIS TEACHER IN THE MARTIAL ARTS."





"THEN HE STOOD BETWEEN THE TWO ARMIES AND CALLED OUT—



"YUYUTSU, ONE OF DURYODHANA'S BROTHERS, SPOKE UP.

O KING, IF YOU WILL ACCEPT ME, I WILL JOIN YOU.

YOU ARE WELCOME, YUYUTSU.



"THE WAR-DRUMS, THE TRUMPETING OF THE ELEPHANTS, THE NEIGHING OF THE HORSES AND THE BLOWING OF THE CONCH-SHELLS MADE A FEARSOME NOISE.



"THE TWO ARMIES FELL UPON EACH OTHER.



"INTENSE WARFARE ENSUED."



"CHARIOTS CONFRONTED CHARIOTS..."



"...CAVALRY CONTENTED WITH CAVALRY..."



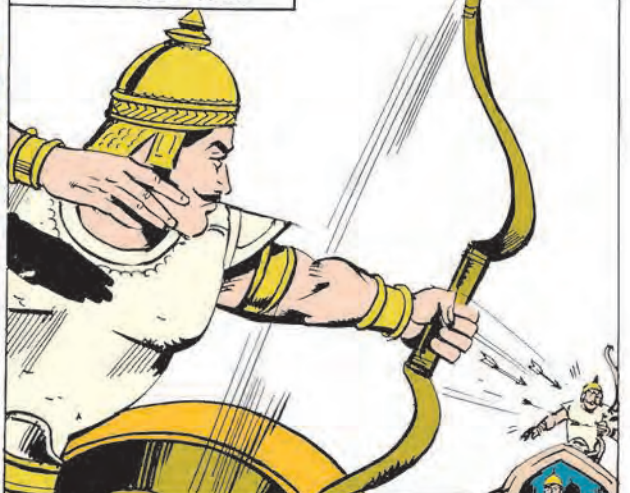
"...AND INFANTRYMEN ENGAGED IN HAND-TO-HAND FIGHTING."



"DUHSHASANA'S SHARP ARROWS WOUNDED NAKULA."



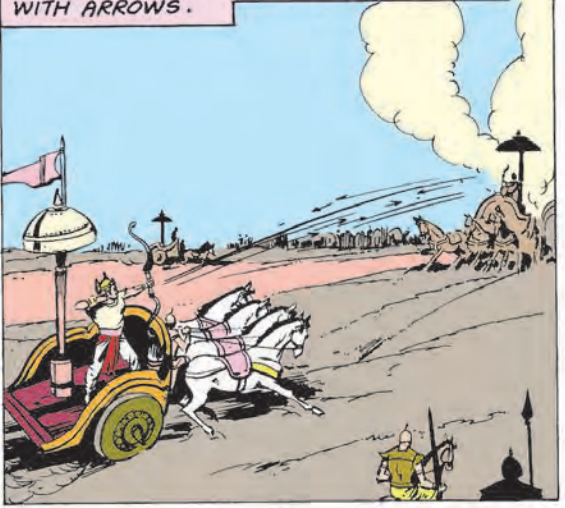
"NAKULA IN TURN SHOWERED ARROWS ON HIM AND INJURED HIM."



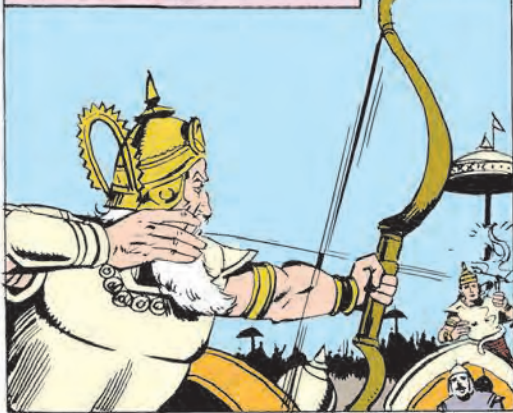
"SHALYA SHATTERED THE BOW OF YUDHISHTHIRA IN TWO ...



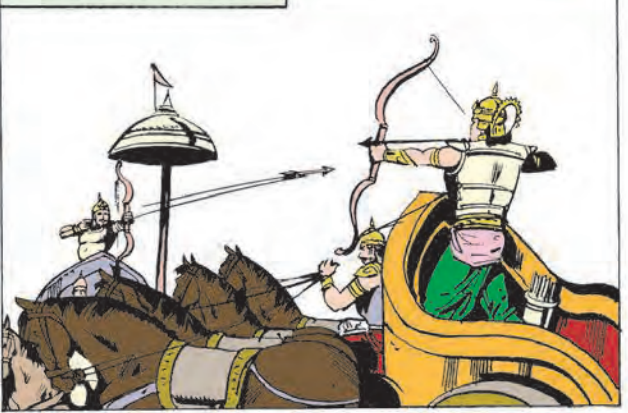
"...AND YUDHISHTHIRA, TAKING ANOTHER BOW, RETALIATED BY ENVELOPING HIM WITH ARROWS.



"DRONA ATTACKED DHRISTADYUMNA AND DESTROYED HIS BOW.



"SHIKHANDI AND ASHWATTHAMA ENGAGED IN A FIERCE BATTLE ...



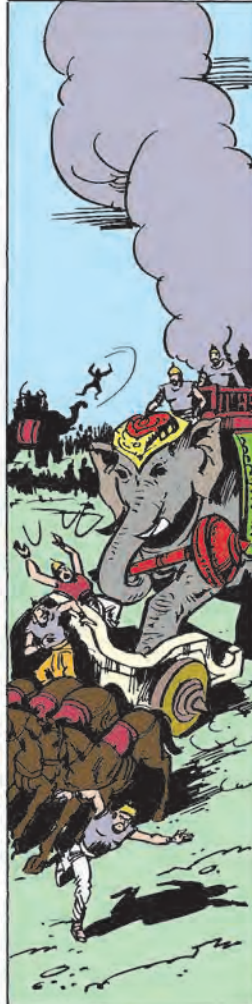
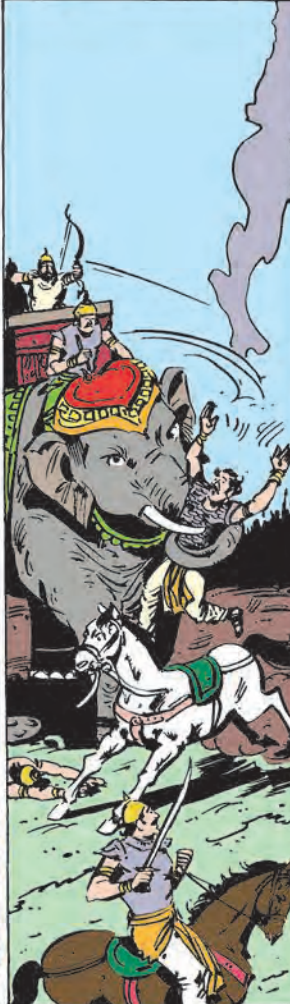
"...AND INFLICTED WOUNDS ON EACH OTHER.



"IN THE FURY OF WAR, THE WARRIORS VIOLATED MANY RULES SET DOWN FOR DHARMAYUDDHA — A RIGHTEOUS WAR. WARRIORS ON CHARIOTS CLASHED WITH CAVALRYMEN AND THOSE MOUNTED ON ELEPHANTS FOUGHT INFANTRYMEN.



"JAYADRATHA AND DRUPADA CONFRONTED EACH OTHER.



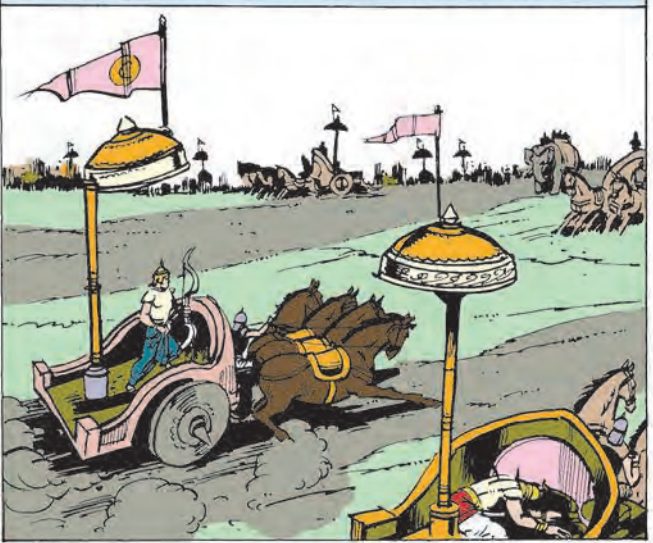
"MANY LAY WOUNDED OR DEAD.



"SHALYA SHOT UTTARA THE PRINCE OF THE MATSYA KINGDOM, DEAD.



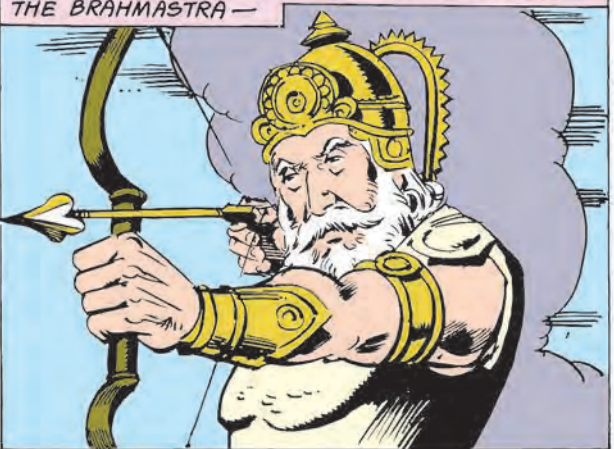
"THEREUPON, UTTARA'S BROTHER SHWETA CAME UP IN A WILD FURY TO ATTACK THE KAURAVAS.



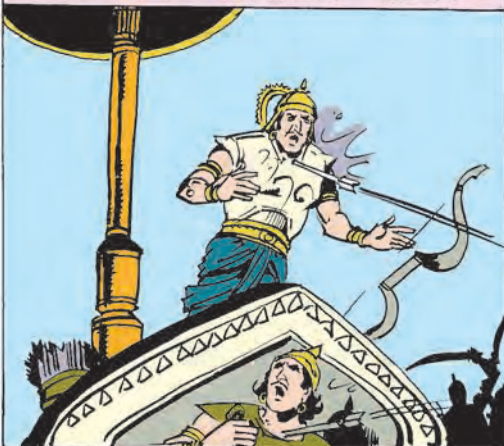
"THE KAURAVA ARMY BEGAN TO SCATTER BEFORE THE FIERCENESS OF HIS WRATH.



"SEEING THE WHOLE ARMY RETREATING IN FEAR OF SHWETA, THE MIGHTY BHEESHMA RELEASED THE BRAHMASTRA —



"...AND PRINCE SHWETA WAS KILLED.



GLOOM DESCENDED ON THE PANDAVA ARMY AS THEIR HERO FELL.



"THE DISHEARTENED PANDAVAS RETURNED TO THEIR CAMP AT THE END OF THE DAY. YUDHISHTHIRA LAMENTED —

O KRISHNA, BHEESHMA WROUGHT HAVOC UPON OUR ARMY TODAY. IF THIS CONTINUES, WE SHALL CERTAINLY BE ANNIHILATED AT HIS HANDS.

DO NOT WORRY, YUDHISHTHIRA. YOU HAVE VALIANT HEROES IN YOUR ARMY WHO WILL NOT HESITATE TO LAY DOWN THEIR LIVES FOR YOUR SAKE.



"ON THE SECOND DAY OF THE WAR, DHRISTADYUMNA, THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, INSTILLED HOPE IN THE PANDAVA ARMY.

TODAY I SHALL CONFRONT THE MIGHTY BHEESHMA, KRIPA, DRONA, SHALYA AND JAYADRATHA.



"THE LOUD BLOWING OF CONCH SHELLS SIGNALLED THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR.



"THE TWO ARMIES CHARGED AGAINST EACH OTHER.

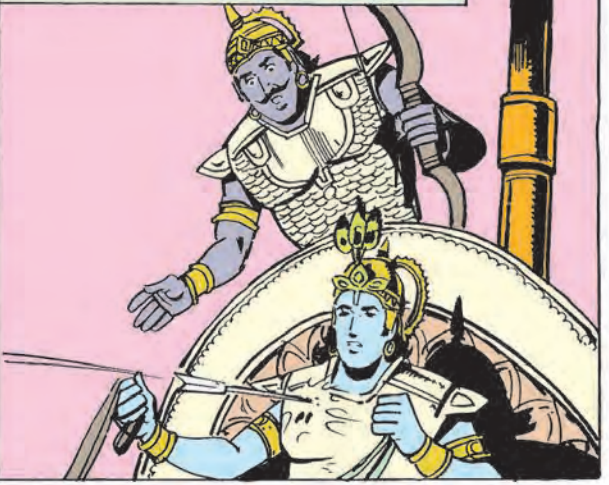


"IN THE INITIAL COMBAT, THE PANDAVA ARMY SUFFERED DEFEAT AND HAD TO WITHDRAW. ARJUNA SAW THIS AND SAID TO KRISHNA —

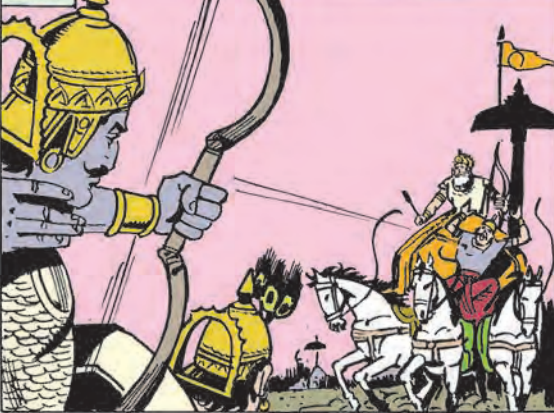
TAKE MY CHARIOT CLOSE TO BHEESHMA. I MUST STOP HIM FROM DESTROYING OUR ARMY.



"IN THE COMBAT BETWEEN BHEESHMA AND ARJUNA, KRISHNA WAS WOUNDED.



"HIGHLY ENRAGED, ARJUNA SHOT AT BHEESHMA'S CHARIOTEER AND WOUNDED HIM.



"ELSEWHERE, DRONA AND DHRISTADYUMNA ENGAGED IN COMBAT.



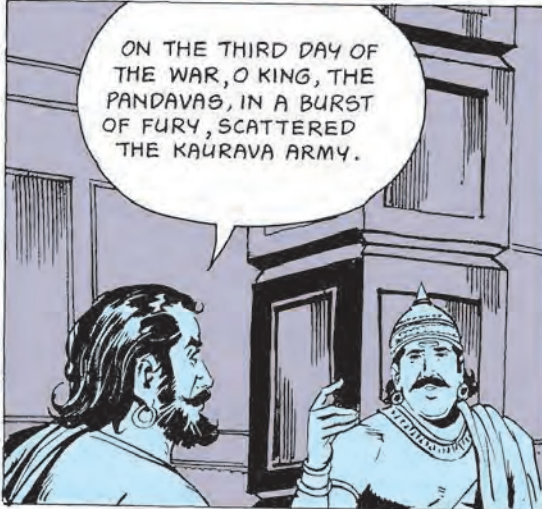
"BHEEMA WAS ON A KILLING SPREE.



"TOWARDS THE END OF THE SECOND DAY ARJUNA AND ABHIMANYU HAD TOGETHER PUT THE KAURAVA ARMY TO FLIGHT.



ON THE THIRD DAY OF THE WAR, O KING, THE PANDAVAS, IN A BURST OF FURY, SCATTERED THE KAURAVA ARMY.



"SEEING HIS ARMY RETREATING, DURYODHANA SAID TO BHEESHMA ACCUSINGLY —

O GRANDSIRE ! YOU ARE DELIBERATELY NOT USING UP ALL YOUR STRENGTH. WHY DID YOU NOT TELL ME BEFORE THE HOSTILITIES COMMENCED THAT YOU WOULD NOT FIGHT THE PANDAVAS AND THEIR ALLIES ? I WOULD HAVE MADE SOME OTHER ARRANGEMENT.

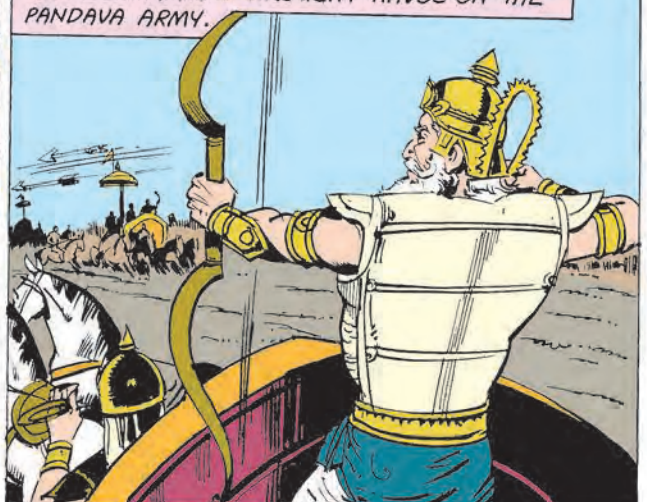


"BHEESHMA REPLIED SMILINGLY —

I HAD TOLD YOU THAT THE PANDAVAS ARE INVINCIBLE. HOWEVER, YOU SHALL NOW SEE THIS OLD MAN DOING HIS BEST IN THIS BATTLE.



"BHEESHMA NOW WROUGHT HAVOC ON THE PANDAVA ARMY.

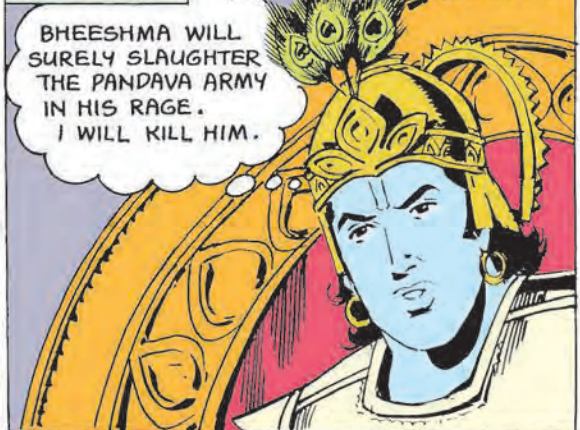




"ON CONFRONTING BHEESHMA, ARJUNA SHOT A VOLLEY OF ARROWS AT HIM.



"BUT BHEESHMA'S FURY CONTINUED UNABATED.



"AS KRISHNA RUSHED AT BHEESHMA WITH HIS SUDARSHANA CHAKRA —



"BUT ARJUNA AND BHEEMA TRIED TO RESTRAIN KRISHNA."

DO NOT TAKE UP ARMS, O KRISHNA! CONTROL YOUR ANGER!

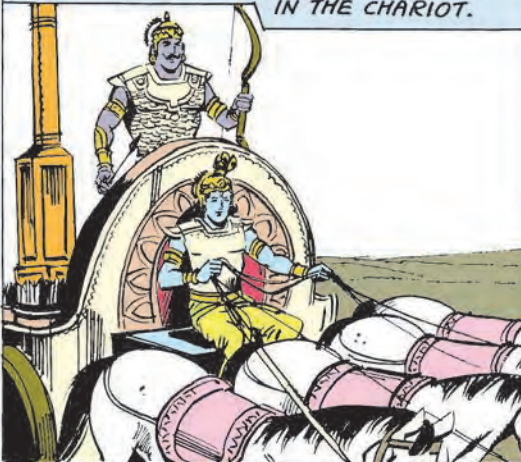


"AND THEN ARJUNA TOOK A VOW."

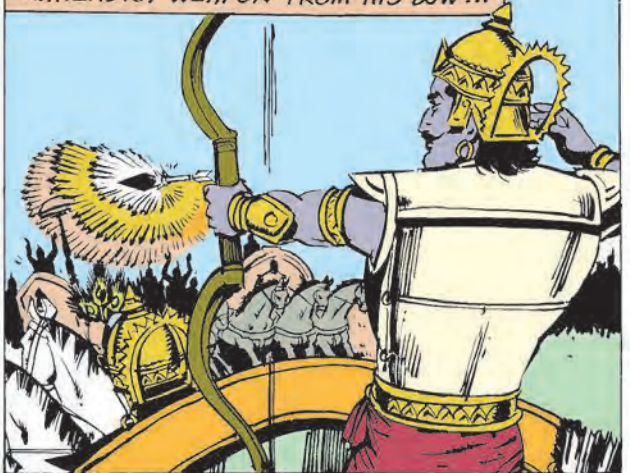
NEVER AGAIN WILL I BE FOUND WANTING IN MY ZEAL TO FIGHT NOR NEGLIGENT OF MY DUTY AS A KSHATRIYA. I WILL KILL ALL THE KAURAVAS.



"KRISHNA WAS PLEASED AT THIS DECLARATION AND RESUMED HIS SEAT IN THE CHARIOT."



"ARJUNA NOW RELEASED THE DIVINE MAHENDRA WEAPON FROM HIS BOW..."



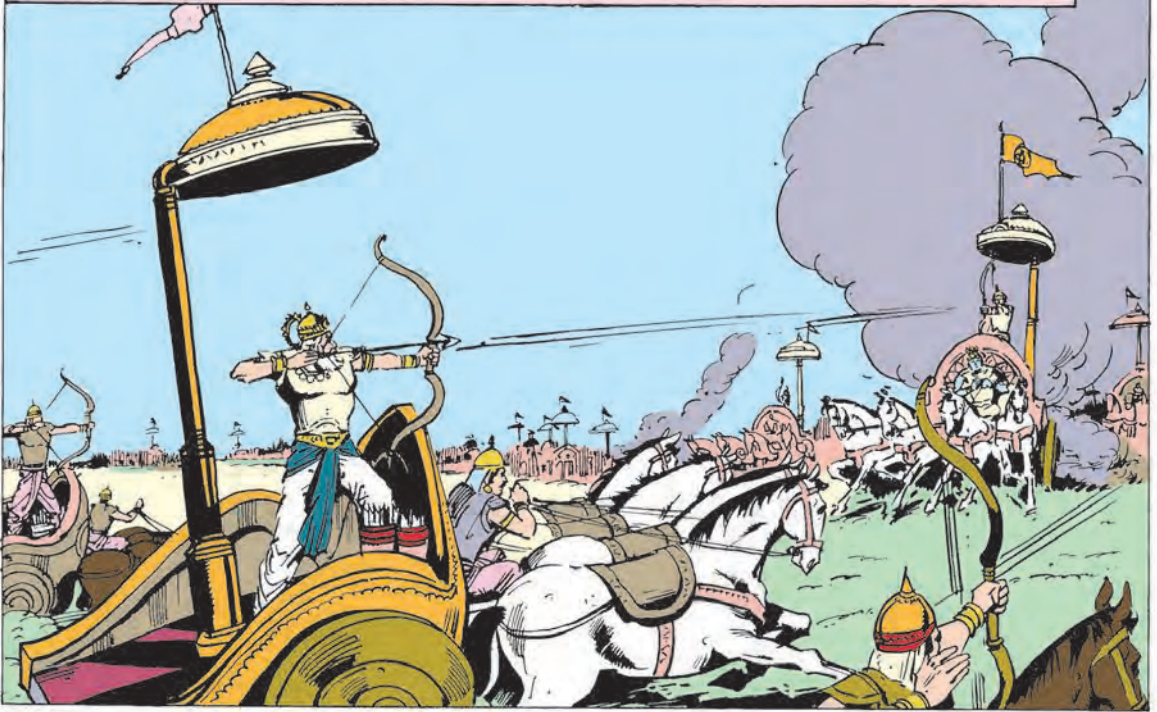
"...THIS WEAPON ALONE CAUSED THE DEATH OF TEN THOUSAND RATHIS (CHARIOT-RIDERS) AND SEVEN HUNDRED ELEPHANTS."



"THE KAURAVA SOLDIERS RETURNED TO THEIR CAMP, EXHAUSTED AND DEMORALISED."



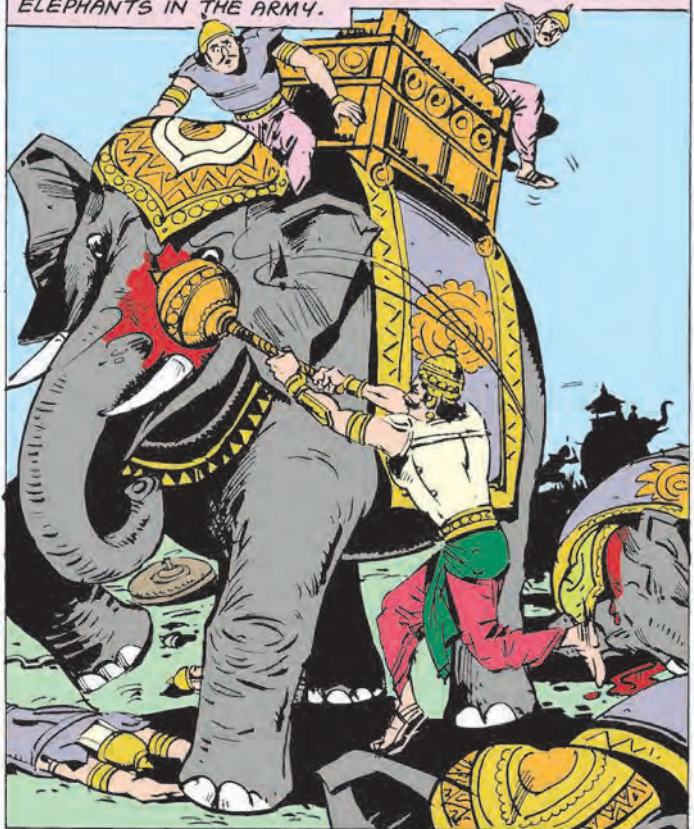
"ON THE FOURTH DAY ARJUNA AND BHEESHMA AGAIN CONFRONTED EACH OTHER.



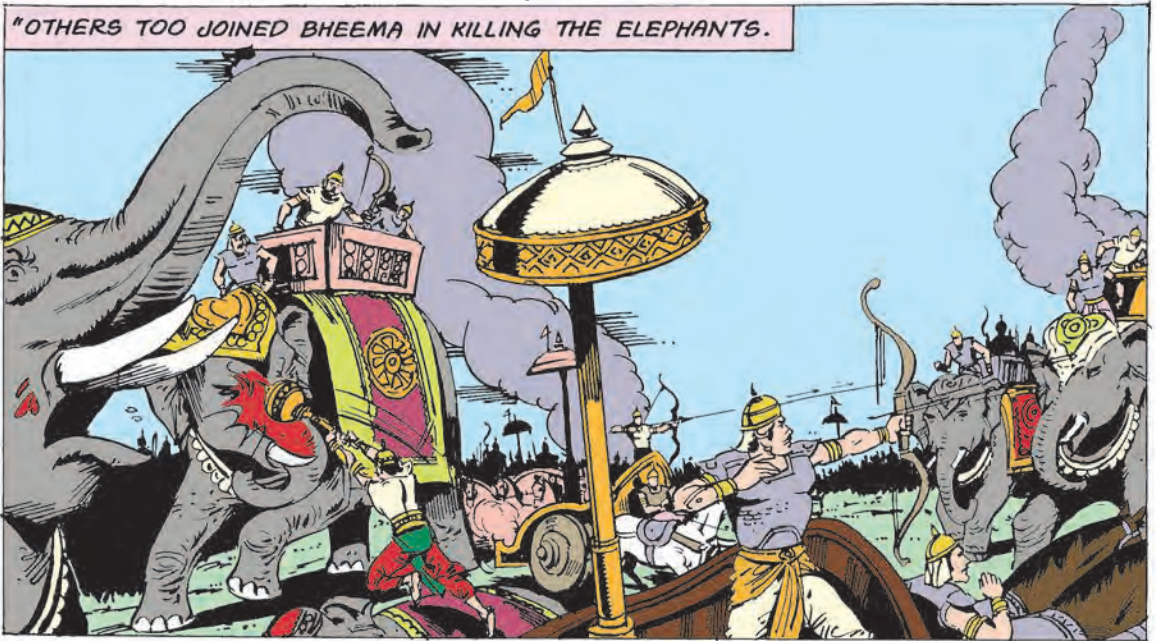
"DHRISHTADYUMNA FOUGHT WITH SHALYA ...



"... WHILE BHEEMA LET LOOSE HIS FURY AGAINST THE ELEPHANTS IN THE ARMY.



"OTHERS TOO JOINED BHEEMA IN KILLING THE ELEPHANTS."



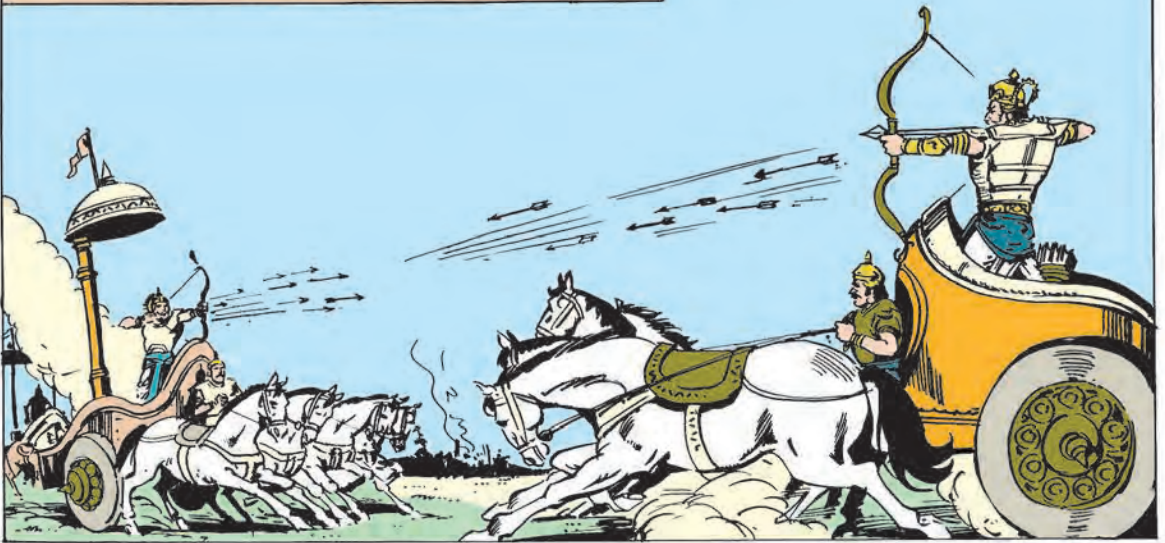
"HIS SON GHATOTKACHA TOO INFLICTED HEAVY CASUALTIES ON THE KAURAVA ARMY."



THUS THE KAURAVAS LOST THE BATTLE ON THE FOURTH DAY TOO.



"ON THE FIFTH DAY, VIRATA FACED BHEESHMA..."



"... BHEEMA FACED DURYODHANA..."



"... WHILE SINGLE-HANDEDLY ABHIMANYU
CONTENDED WITH SEVERAL OF DHRTARASHTRA'S
SONS."



"ON THIS DAY ARJUNA KILLED THOUSANDS
OF KAURAVAS RIDING IN THEIR CHARIOTS."



"EXHAUSTED, BOTH ARMIES RETURNED TO
THEIR RESPECTIVE CAMPS AT SUNDOWN."



"ON THE MORNING OF THE SIXTH DAY —

ALAS, SANJAYA,
FATE SEEMS TO
FAVOUR PANDAVAS
IN THIS WAR AND
NOT US.

THIS WAR HAS BEEN OF
YOUR OWN MAKING, O KING.
HOWEVER, LET ME NARRATE
TO YOU HOW THE BATTLE
IS FOUGHT.



"THE TWO ARMIES STOOD
FACING EACH OTHER AT
DAWN.



"BHEEMA SUDDENLY GOT DOWN FROM HIS CHARIOT
AND CHARGED HEADLONG AT THE KAURAVA
RANKS.



"DHRISTADYUMNA CAME IN
SEARCH OF BHEEMA.

BHEEMA'S
CHARIOT IS
EMPTY!



"HE ENQUIRED OF THE CHARIOTEER —

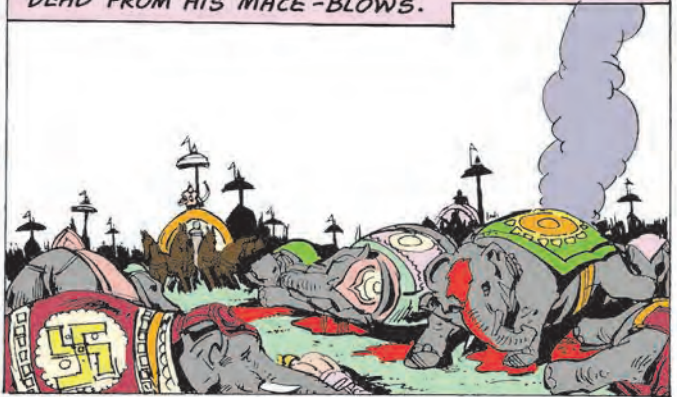
WHERE IS
DEAR BHEEMA?

O LORD, HE
HAS GONE AWAY
TOWARDS THE
KAURAVA ARMY
LEAVING ME
ALONE HERE.





"THUS DHRISHTADYUMNA FOLLOWED THE TRACK OF BHEEMA, WHICH WAS LAID WITH ELEPHANTS DEAD FROM HIS MACE-BLOWS."



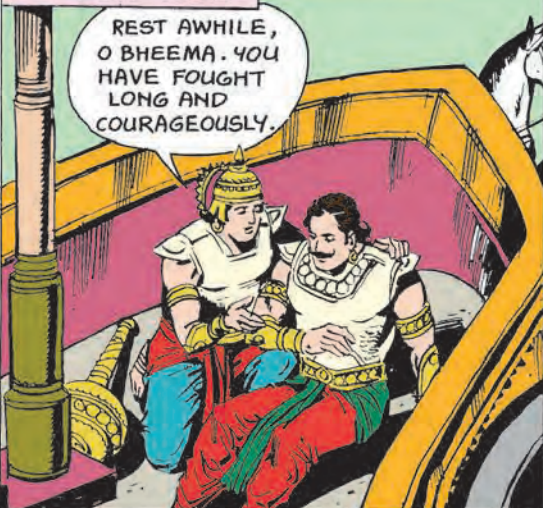
"BHEEMA, SURROUNDED BY ENEMIES ON ALL SIDES, WAS FIGHTING VALIANTLY."



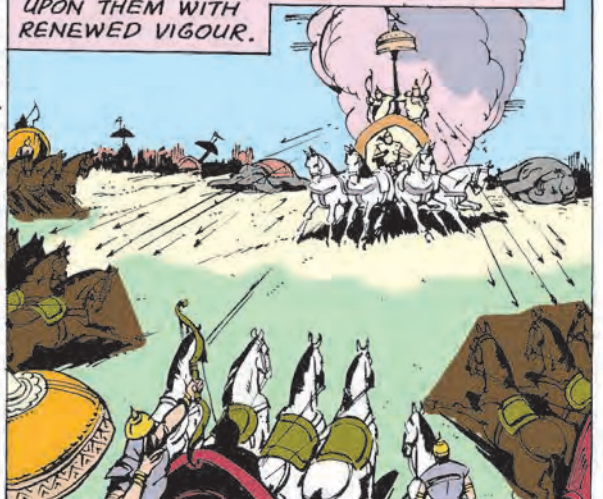
"DHRISHTADYUMNA INVITED BHEEMA TO GET INTO HIS CHARIOT."



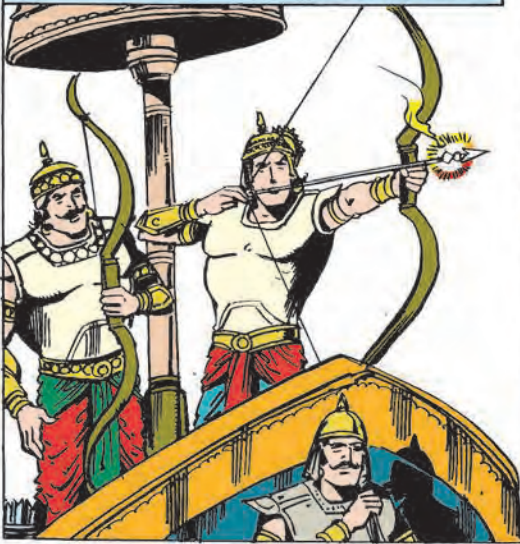
"HE CAREFULLY REMOVED THE ARROWS FROM HIS BODY."



"SEEING DHRISHTADYUMNA COME TO THE AID OF BHEEMA, THE KAURAVA ARMY FELL UPON THEM WITH RENEWED VIGOUR."



"DHRISHTADYUMNA THEN USED A POWERFUL WEAPON AGAINST THEM..."



"...WHICH MADE THEM ALL UNCONSCIOUS."



"DRONA ARRIVED IN A CHARIOT AND RELEASED A COUNTER-WEAPON..."



"...WHICH BROUGHT LIFE BACK INTO THE UNCONSCIOUS KAURAVAS."



"DRONA THEN TURNED HIS FURY AGAINST DHRISHTADYUMNA..."

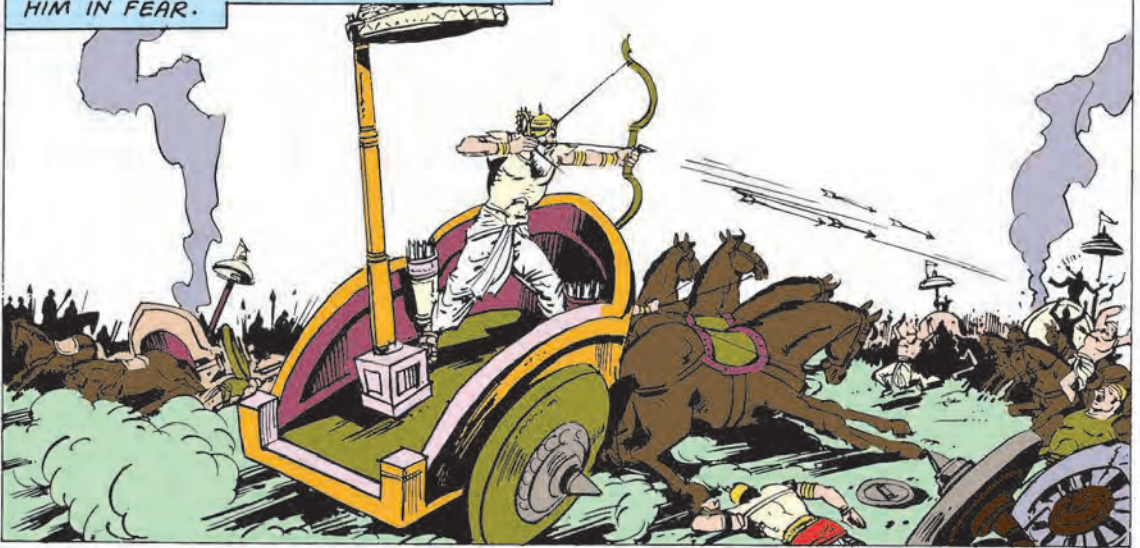


"...AND KILLED DHRISHTADYUMNA'S HORSES AND CHARIOTEER."



ABHIMANYU!
I'M COMING OVER
TO YOUR
CHARIOT!

"DRONA CONTINUED FIGHTING FIERCELY. THE PANDAVA ARMY TREMBLED BEFORE HIM IN FEAR."



"ELSEWHERE BHEEMA TORMENTED DURYODHANA WITH AN INCESSANT SHOWER OF ARROWS. DURYODHANA WAS WOUNDED ALL OVER HIS BODY."



"KRIPA THEN INVITED DURYODHANA TO CLIMB ON TO HIS CHARIOT."

COME IN HERE, DURYODHANA.



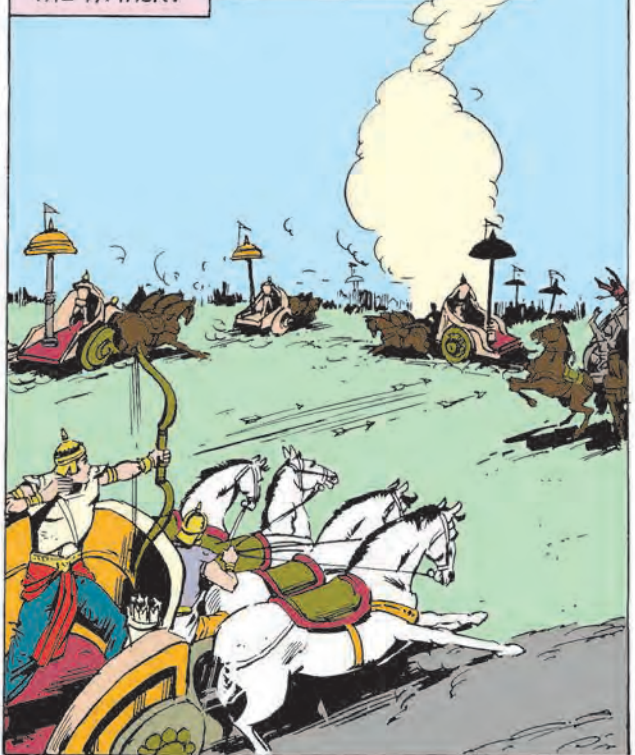
SIT DOWN AND REST FOR A WHILE, DURYODHANA.



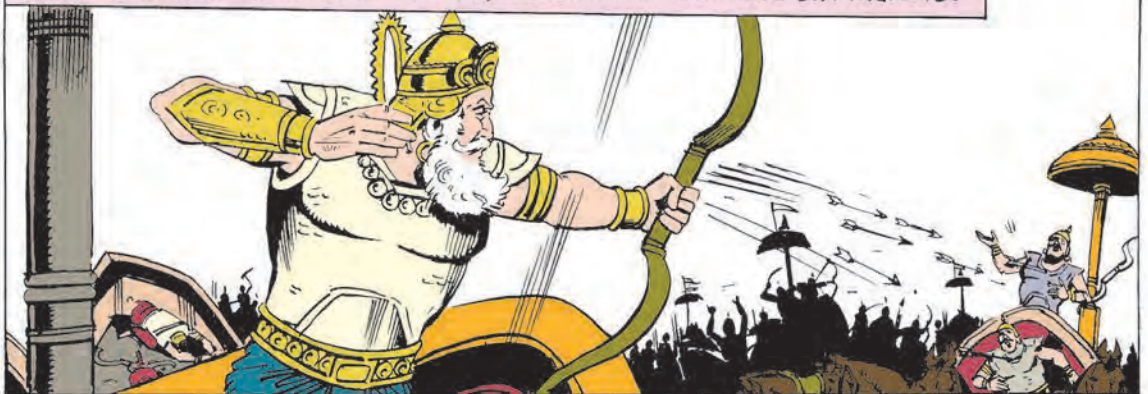
"A NUMBER OF KAURAVAS RIDING THEIR CHARIOTS SURROUNDED ABHIMANYU AND ATTACKED HIM..."



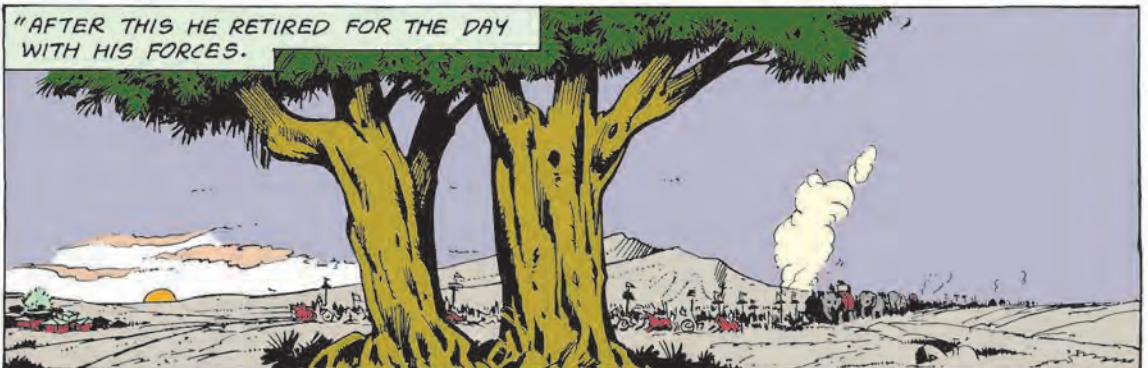
"...BUT THE YOUNG ABHIMANYU REPULSED THE ATTACK."



"BHEESHMA, OF MATCHLESS VALOUR, SLAUGHTERED SEVERAL BATTALIONS."

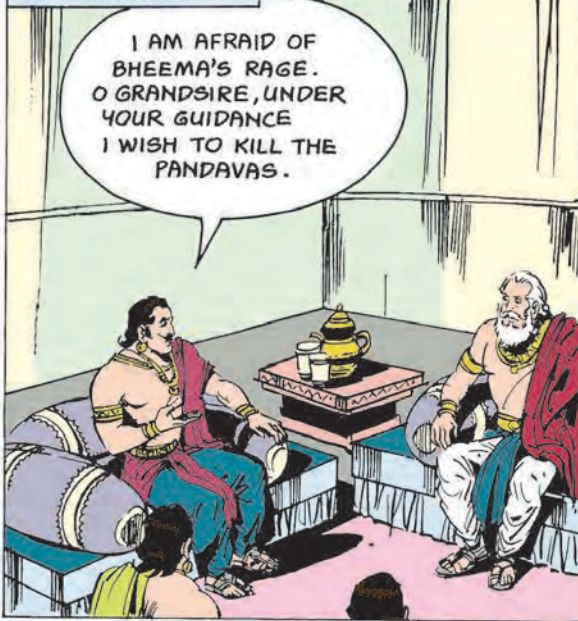


"AFTER THIS HE RETIRED FOR THE DAY WITH HIS FORCES."



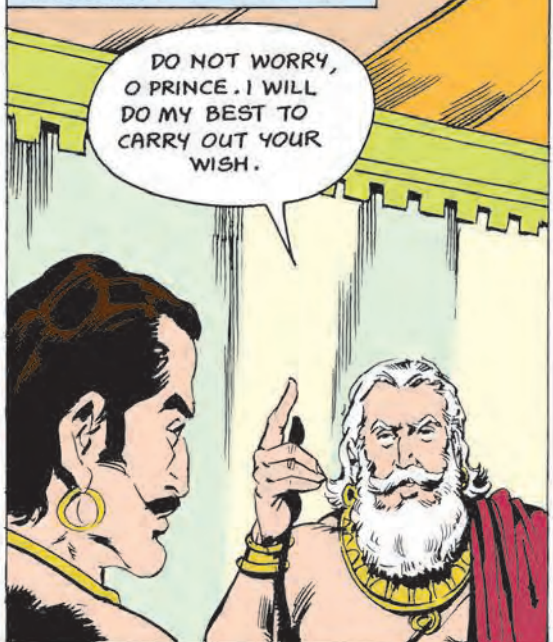
"ON REACHING THE CAMP DURYODHANA SAID TO BHEESHMA —

I AM AFRAID OF BHEEMA'S RAGE. O GRANDSIRE, UNDER YOUR GUIDANCE I WISH TO KILL THE PANDAVAS.

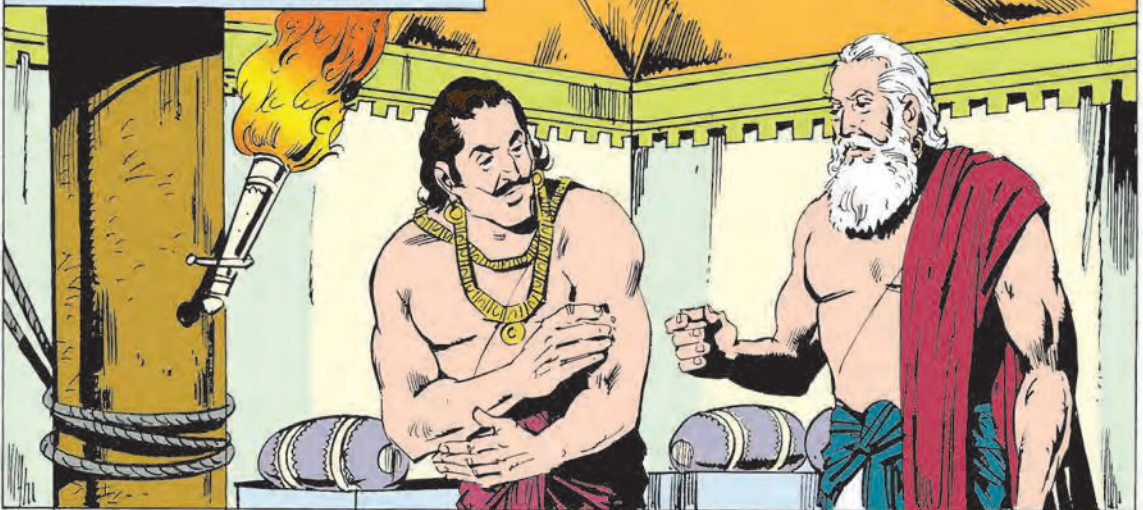


"BHEESHMA REASSURED HIM.

DO NOT WORRY, O PRINCE. I WILL DO MY BEST TO CARRY OUT YOUR WISH.



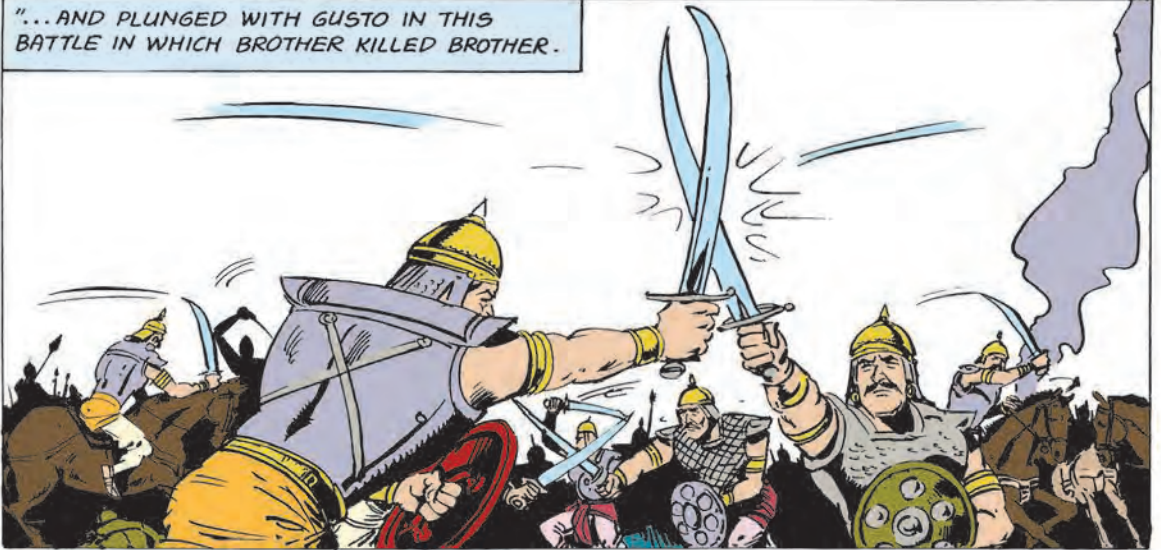
"BHEESHMA THEN GAVE DURYODHANA AN OINTMENT TO HEAL HIS WOUNDS.



"THE TWO ARMIES FEELING REFRESHED IN THE MORNING AGAIN FACED EACH OTHER ON THE SEVENTH DAY...



"...AND PLUNGED WITH GUSTO IN THIS BATTLE IN WHICH BROTHER KILLED BROTHER."

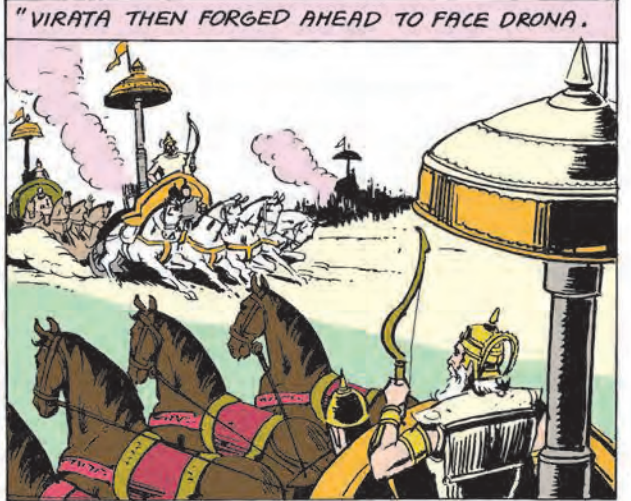


"DURYODHANA ANNOUNCED —

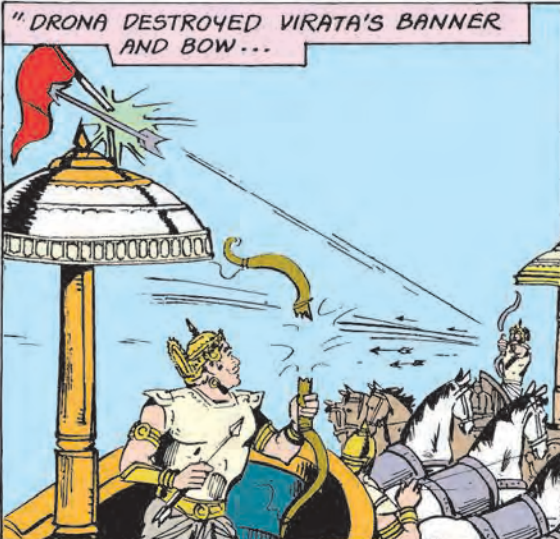
O HEROES! PROTECT
BHEESHMA FOR HE IS
DETERMINED TO FIGHT
ARJUNA TO THE FINISH.



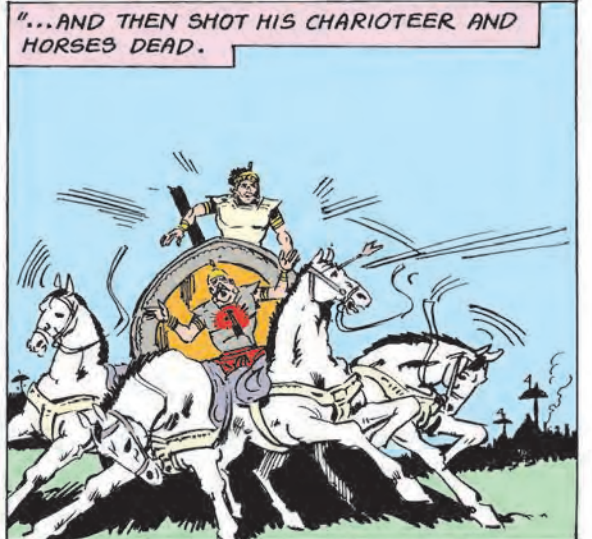
"VIRATA THEN FORGED AHEAD TO FACE DRONA."



"DRONA DESTROYED VIRATA'S BANNER
AND BOW..."



"...AND THEN SHOT HIS CHARIOTEER AND
HORSES DEAD."



"VIRATA GOT ON TO THE CHARIOT OF HIS SON SHANKHA."



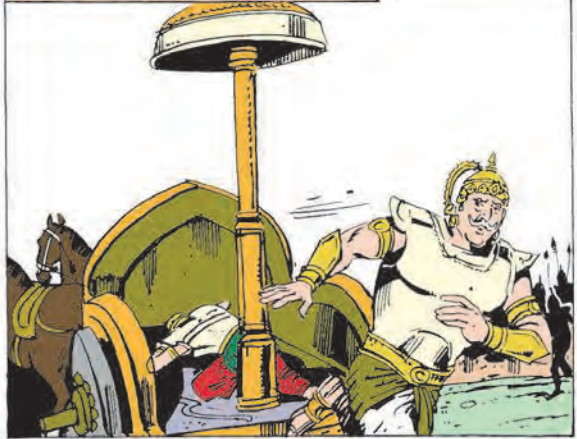
"FATHER AND SON TOGETHER RESTRAINED THE ONSLAUGHT OF DRONA'S VIGOUR."



"DRONA RETALIATED BY SHOOTING A POISONOUS ARROW AT SHANKHA."



"AS SHANKHA COLLAPSED DEAD, VIRATA FLED THE BATTLE FIELD IN FEAR."



"SHIKHANDI WOUNDED ASHWATTHAMA IN HIS FOREHEAD."



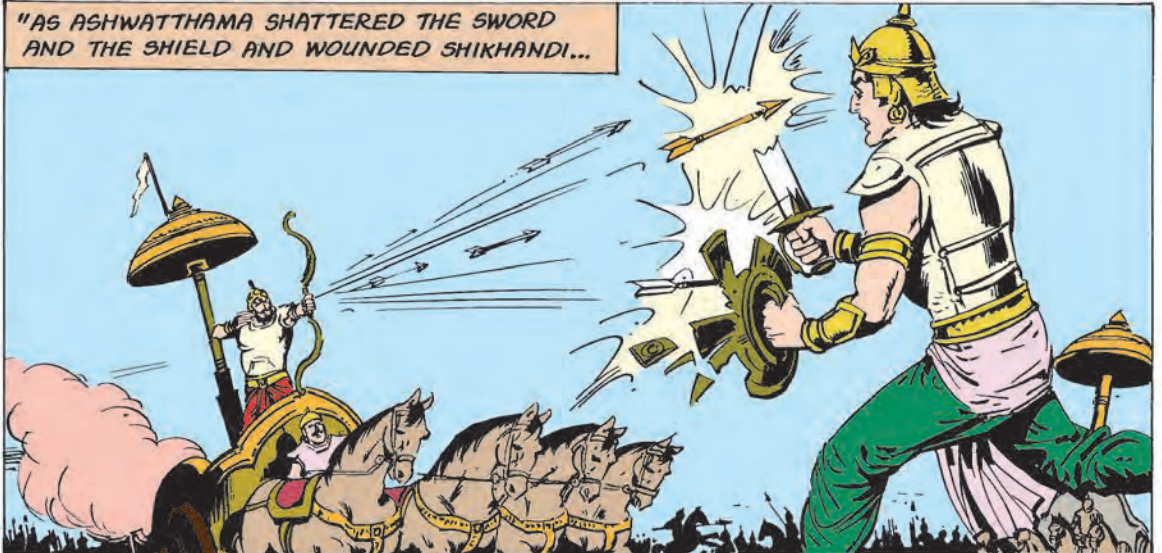
"AN ENRAGED ASHWATTHAMA SHOT SHIKHANDI'S CHARIOTEER AND HORSES DEAD."



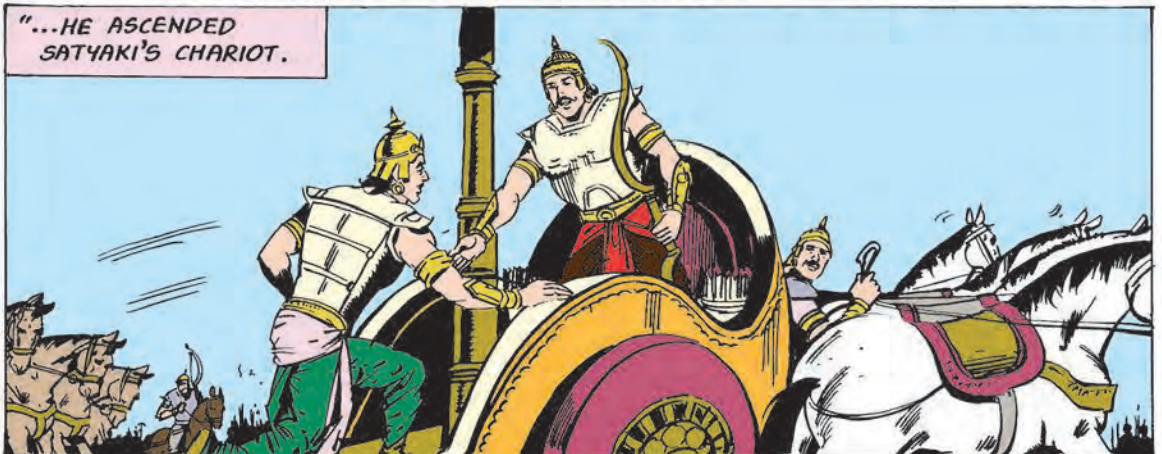
"SHIKHANDI THEN TOOK UP A SWORD AND A SHIELD AND JUMPED OUT OF HIS CHARIOT, WHILE ASHWATTHAMA SHOWERED A VOLLEY OF ARROWS AT HIM.



"AS ASHWATTHAMA SHATTERED THE SWORD AND THE SHIELD AND WOUNDED SHIKHANDI..."



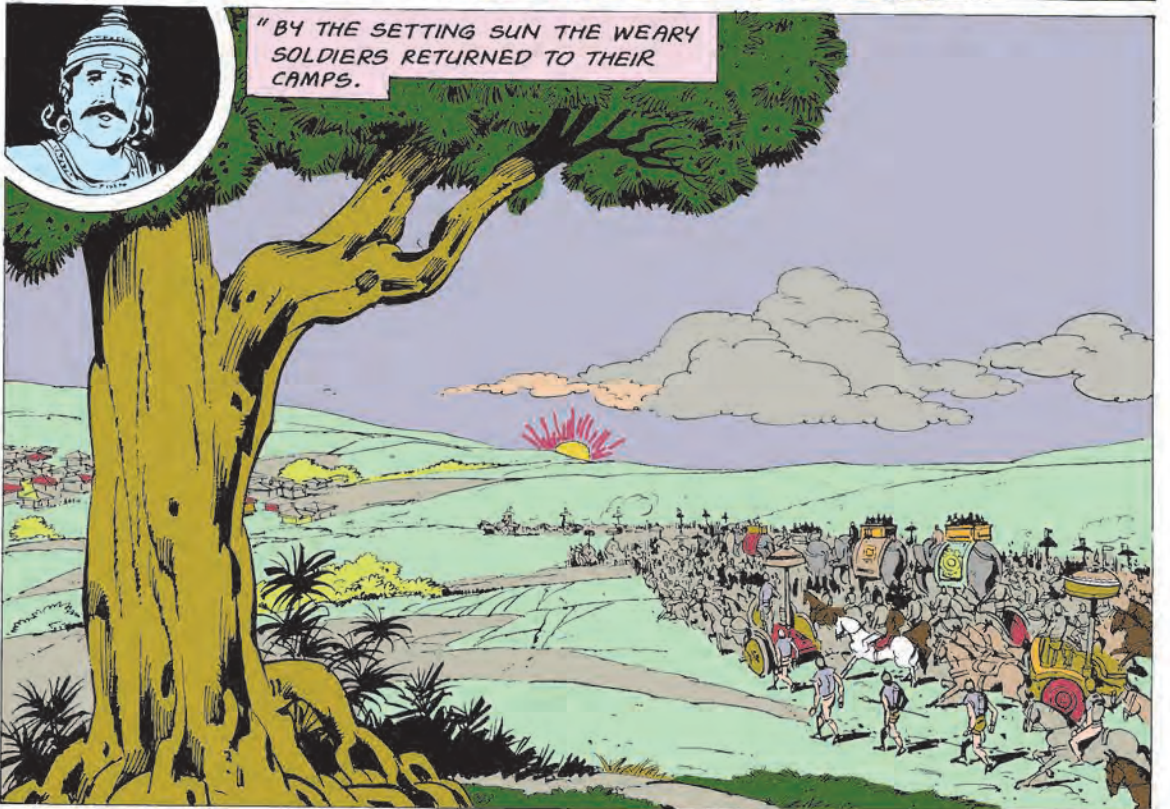
"...HE ASCENDED SATYAKI'S CHARIOT.



"AND SATYAKI WAGED A FEARSOME BATTLE AGAINST THE KAURAVA ARMY AND KILLED MANY A BRAVE WARRIOR."



"BY THE SETTING SUN THE WEARY SOLDIERS RETURNED TO THEIR CAMPS."



"THEY DRESSED EACH OTHER'S WOUNDS..."



"... AND SLEPT PEACEFULLY."



"ON THE EIGHTH DAY, BHEEMA KILLED AS MANY AS SEVENTEEN OF DHRITARASHTRA'S SONS."



"ARJUNA'S SON IRAVAN * WAS KILLED BY THE KAURAVAS. ARJUNA'S DISTRESS KNEW NO BOUNDS."



ALAS!
IRAVAN, MY
SON, IS NO
MORE!



"BHEEMA AND HIS SON GHATOTKACHA REIGNED SUPREME IN VIOLENT FURY."



"AT DUSK WHEN THE TWO ARMIES RETIRED, DURYODHANA WAS ANGUISHED TO FIND THE FIELD STREWN WITH CORPSES OF SOLDIERS, DEAD ANIMALS, THE WRECKAGE OF CHARIOTS AND WEAPONS.



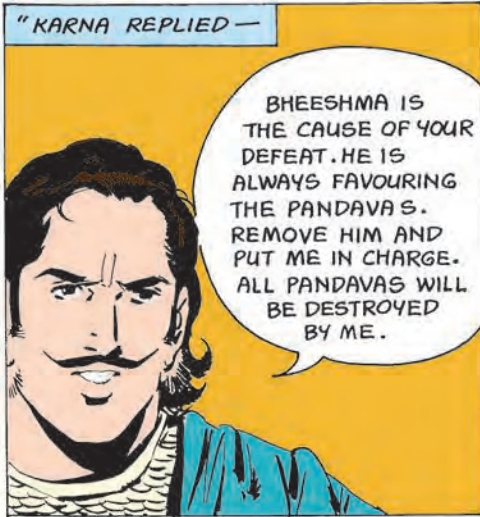
"WHEN BACK AT THE CAMP HE CONSULTED KARNA, WHO HAD NOT YET TAKEN PART IN THE FIGHTING.

O KARNA, WE ARE NOT ABLE TO CAUSE EVEN A DENT IN THE PANDAVA ARMY, WHILE THEY KILL OUR MEN INDISCRIMINATELY. I FEEL DEJECTED AND HELPLESS.



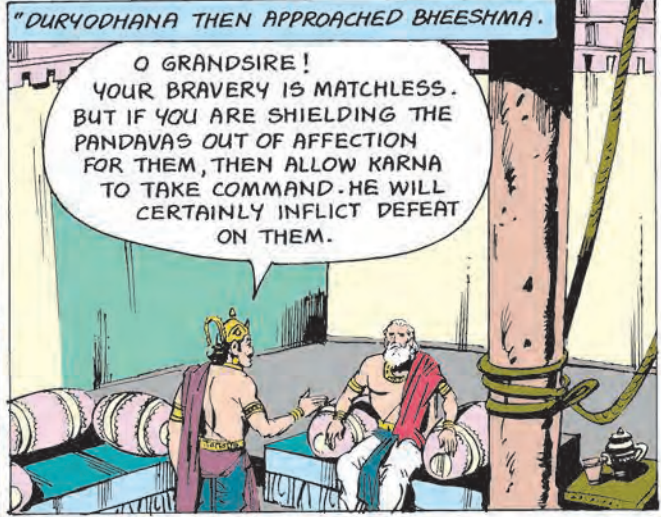
"KARNA REPLIED —

BHEESHMA IS THE CAUSE OF YOUR DEFEAT. HE IS ALWAYS FAVOURING THE PANDAVAS. REMOVE HIM AND PUT ME IN CHARGE. ALL PANDAVAS WILL BE DESTROYED BY ME.



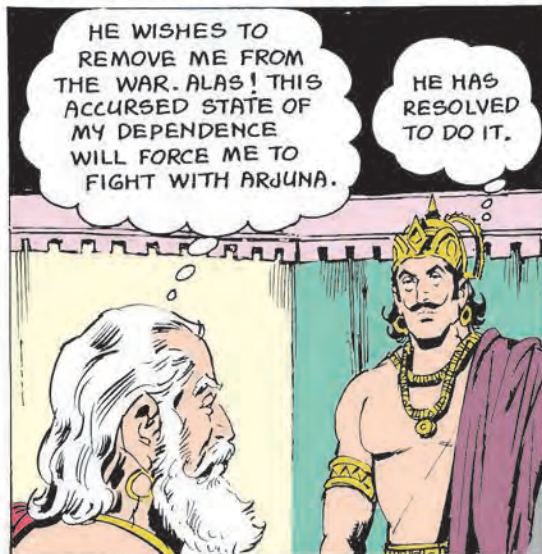
"DURYODHANA THEN APPROACHED BHEESHMA.

O GRANDSIRE! YOUR BRAVERY IS MATCHLESS. BUT IF YOU ARE SHIELDING THE PANDAVAS OUT OF AFFECTION FOR THEM, THEN ALLOW KARNA TO TAKE COMMAND. HE WILL CERTAINLY INFLICT DEFEAT ON THEM.

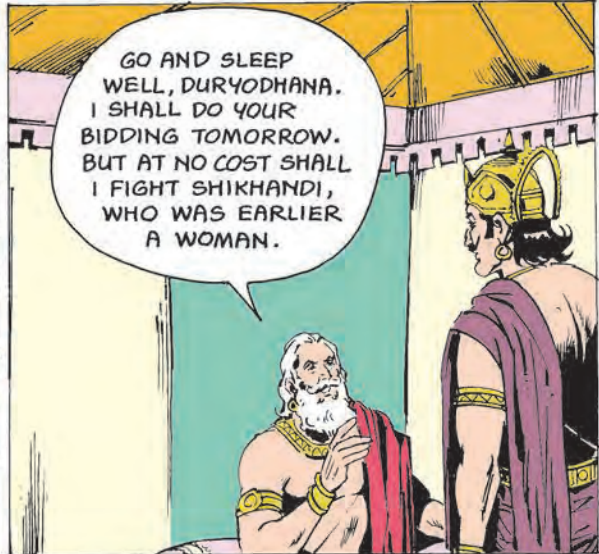


HE WISHES TO REMOVE ME FROM THE WAR. ALAS! THIS ACCURSED STATE OF MY DEPENDENCE WILL FORCE ME TO FIGHT WITH ARJUNA.

HE HAS RESOLVED TO DO IT.

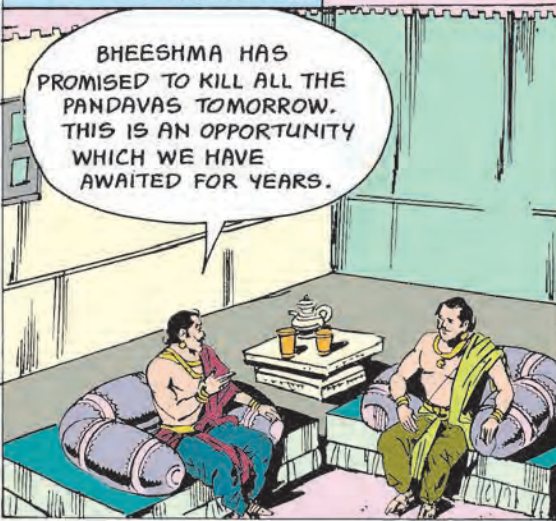


GO AND SLEEP WELL, DURYODHANA. I SHALL DO YOUR BIDDING TOMORROW. BUT AT NO COST SHALL I FIGHT SHIKHANDI, WHO WAS EARLIER A WOMAN.



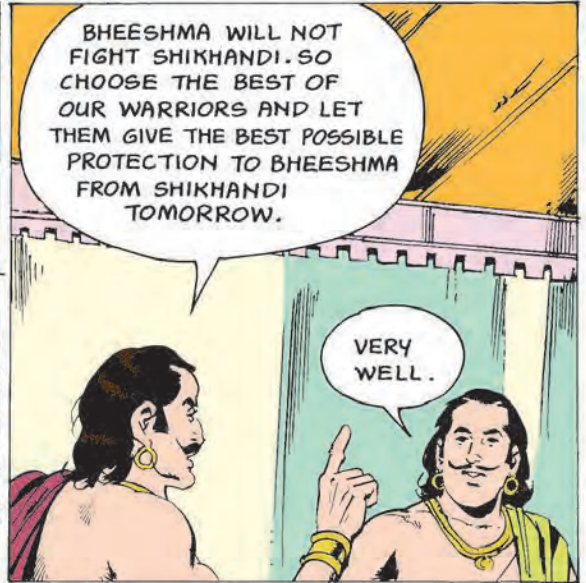
"DURYODHANA GOT BACK TO HIS CAMP AND SPOKE TO DUHSHASANA.

BHEESHMA HAS PROMISED TO KILL ALL THE PANDAVAS TOMORROW. THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY WHICH WE HAVE AWAITED FOR YEARS.



BHEESHMA WILL NOT FIGHT SHIKHANDI. SO CHOOSE THE BEST OF OUR WARRIORS AND LET THEM GIVE THE BEST POSSIBLE PROTECTION TO BHEESHMA FROM SHIKHANDI TOMORROW.

VERY WELL.



"ON THE NINTH DAY AS THE TWO ARMIES STOOD FACING EACH OTHER, ARJUNA SAW BHEESHMA PLACED UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE MIGHTIEST OF THE KAURAVAS.

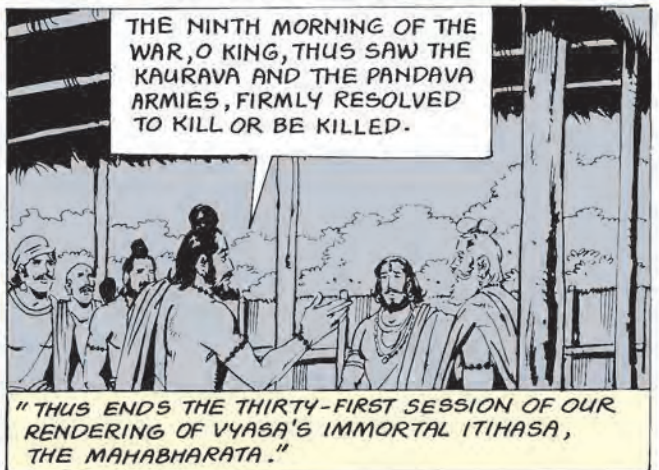


"HE THEN TOLD DHKRISHTADYUMNA, THE PANDAVA COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF —

PLACE SHIKHANDI AGAINST BHEESHMA TODAY. I WILL PROTECT HIM FROM BHEESHMA.



THE NINTH MORNING OF THE WAR, O KING, THUS SAW THE KAURAVA AND THE PANDAVA ARMIES, FIRMLY RESOLVED TO KILL OR BE KILLED.



"THUS ENDS THE THIRTY-FIRST SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA, THE MAHABHARATA."